Barbara Alice Mann
& Kaarina Kailo

The Woman Who Married the Bear

The Spirituality of the Ancient Foremothers

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BARBARA ALICE MANN AND KAARINA KAILO

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For the Grandmothers

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Acknowledgments

Writing a joint book is never easy, and it becomes only more daunting when the authors dwell on two separate continents, North America and Eurasia. Add to that a nasty war whose Russian sabers are rattling sideways at Finland, the home of Kailo, and gun-toting racists rushing about the Great Lakes of North America, the home of Mann, with the crazies in both locales killing people their bobble eyes see as "enemies," and the formula is not normally one predictive of manuscript completion!

Notwithstanding, ever mindful of our responsibilities to Bear and Earth, we finished our task.

First, then, we would like to thank Bear for modeling nerve in the face of harrowing circumstances.

Second, we thank the Woman Who Married the Bear, to ensure the continuity of creation now that it certainly seems under nationalist as well as ecological threat.

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Having both married bears, one now in the spirit world and one still very much in the present, leaving his socks in the middle of the floor, Mann and Kailo thank them both for their kind support.

First, There Is Mother

An Introduction

For decades, frenzied Western research on ancient bear ceremonies and hunting rituals has raced across Northern Europe, Russia, and North America, nearly all of it male-focused, oblivious that, first, there was Mother. How she could have been missed so far requires some explaining, for the symbolic affinities between Mother and her Bear in the ur-sauna, the moon lodge, and the birthing lodge practically leap out of the cave at us. This book walks fearlessly into the cave, following the umbilicus connecting the sauna and the moon lodge to the Mother spirituality around Bear in their dance of cyclical rebirth. Spread is always an indicator of the antiquity and power of an idea, so that the commonality of the woman who marries Bear man, becoming mother to his Bear child, as found in places such as Indigenous North America, Samiland, Romania, Armenia, and Siberia, makes evident that the story was birthed in lithic times.

The life-oriented story of the Woman Who Married the Bear bespeaks ancient matriarchies focused on regeneration in the spring as the first, best gift, modeling eco-balance and ancestral return in fresh flesh. Norwegian and Swedish Sami call the slain bear *saivo* (sacred), the same word used to indicate the spirits of the departed.[1] In Native America, the Sleeping Bear is always sacred, with many naturally occurring sites Bearly designated. *Matȟó Pahá* ("Bear Butte," South Dakota), is called "Groaning Bear" by the Lakota people, a likely reflection of its origin as a magma bubble forcing its way up through cracks in the earth, a volcano that has yet to complete its task of eruption. The Lakota suspect that early people, eleven thousand years ago when the bubble began its extrusion through the surface, heard the sound of its coming and likened it to groaning.[2] As recently as 1833, *Wakíŋyaŋ Pahá* ("Thunder Butte"), a companion hill, was described as "moaning," as well.[3] This text is not as inscrutable as it may seem.

Across Indigenous America (as well as across Indigenous Europe and Finland), traditionals never directly name the most powerful, sacred spirits

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but refer to them euphemistically.[4] Thus, the Old Man, who is the Big White Man of the Lakota, is the ancient giant, guardian of the Aurora Borealis, *Waziya* ("Blower-From-Snow-Pines"), who lives underground in a hole.[5] At one time, Warm-Face, alone, walked the earth, but then *Waziya*, the blizzard, was suddenly freed from the hole to which he had been confined by a trickster. Leaping forth, *Waziya* "snapped and stripped" the "tall trees" and knocked the people's homes flat on the ground. All Warm-Face's "tender shoots" were destroyed. It was a "long time" before the people realized that *Waziya* had come from the hole in the ground.[6]

Women, including Mother Earth, groan in giving birth, and in the Woodlands, winter is women's time of year, when life regroups, preparing to re-emerge.[7] Caves are holes in the ground, from which things, like bears, emerge. Caves are likened to the female womb, from which life emerges after it sleeps a season. Seasonal change blows summer warmth away with snow.

The Sleeping Bear Dunes along Lake Michigan speak to the concept of death and rebirth through the sleeping mother bear. According to a tradition kept by the Ottawa and Chippewa of the Upper Great Lakes, a hungry mother black bear and her two cubs looked to swim across Lake Michigan from the Wisconsin side to the Michigan side, where food was plentiful. The tired mother bear crawled to the Michigan shore. Not strong enough to survive the swim, her cubs drowned, but the Manitou of the lake raised them back up as the two Manitou Islands. The mother bear fell asleep on the sand, awaiting the return of her cubs.[8] This is a story of death (hibernation) and rebirth, emerging mystically from the amniotic fluids of Mother Earth. Thus are death and rebirth cyclically united through female fertility, from caves to constellations.

In the so-called Old World, archaeological, ethnological, mythological, and literary comparisons suggest that the various bear-related feasts, festivals, and other traditions in its Northern Hemisphere have common roots regarding a mythological Divine Bear. Archaeomythological research of the so-called Old World gives evidence of the most archaic roots of the bear mythology and rituals.[9] The commonalities across the areas now called Sápmi, Scandinavia, the Baltic lands, Russia, Siberia, and Eurasia are not cultural universals but rather reflect a widely shared reference to the Bear as a numinous entity.[10] There are specific similarities in content and form, however, that also bring tidings of archaic Mother and Bear worship as centering on spring regeneration and rebirth. At the origins of matriarchal peoples, woman was in the ceremonial center, as Peggy Reeves Sanday and Heide

Goettner-Abendroth, among others, have discovered in their lifelong research.[11] Mothers and grandmothers were not dominators of any kind, but a symbolic center of the culture in their roles as fire-bringer, hearth-keeper, provider of life, of death and of rebirth.

For most northern cultures with a strong bear mythology, Bear features as a mythic ancestor whose gender has changed significantly. In most of the cultures, woman is the one who provides her clan with the Original Instructions on how to behave with Bear as divine.[12] She informs the hunters of how they must behave in the hunt and of how they must respect the bear, so it will keep providing humans with fur and food. Her role has, however, been treated as a side issue in most patriarchal research. Nevertheless, the ancient social imagination requires us to give importance to the symbolism of birth (female) equal to the importance of death (male), since the opposites unite in an unending cycle of turn-taking, a primal tension beyond modern hierarchical dualisms, that creates an ever-new and renewing syntheses.

The woman who becomes Bear by mating with Bear thus becomes the she-bear ancestor of humanity. Her cyclical worldview derives from observation of the bear's hibernation and spring regeneration. She is both ancestor and renewal in re/birth. The bear's den is the female womb, and the Paleolithic bear caves are the prototype of sacred sites, wherein gifts—especially gifts of life, healing, and purification—circulated to link material and immaterial forms.

First, then, there is Mother, the Bear Mother Earth. She sleeps through winter to give life freely to her children, who await her will to bring them forth from the waters of her womb.

Barbara Alice Mann

Over the summer of 1968, a month or so after the Robert Kennedy assassination, I went on a cross-country road trip. Driving through Yellowstone Park along a quiet road, heading for the Mammoth Hot Springs, there were no other cars around, but dead ahead, something was sojourning in the road. Coming closer, I saw the shapes morph into three grizzly bears, their joint bulk spread across the road, blocking the way.

There was no alternative but to stop and furiously roll up the windows as the bears lumbered over to the car, probably smelling the food stash in the back. The biggest, hence eldest, stood on two legs to walk toward the vehicle,

putting her paws directly over the front hood to peer shortsightedly into the front seat. The other two, whom I took for nearly grown cubs, went to either side of the car, rearing up. The right paw of the cub at my side practically covered the glass, inches from my face, leaving me to hope that the pane would hold back its weight. Eventually, the cub pawing the driver's side door went around to the back of the car and began crawling onto the roof, its weight visible inside the cab from the slight roof dent. The mother in front was stroking the windshield, attempting to enter the cab. I watched, holding my breath as much in awe as in trepidation. After several minutes, seeing that they were not gaining entry, one cub broke free from the quest, heading for the woods, the mother soon waddling after, with the second cub bringing up their rear.

Three is the "pay attention" number in the Eastern Woodlands.[13] Yes, Grandmother, I was paying attention. I figure that the experience was connected with the fact that I am Bear Clan, but it always nagged at me thereafter that something else, something profound, something ancient, was at work. Of course, I knew that bears figured in lithic carvings and cave art, a circumstance that Western anthropologists and paleontologists write off to the fact that bears hibernate in caves. I knew that something more cryptic than just naptime was going on, however. Bear stories are extensive in Indigenous North America, both in cultural spread and in spiritual depth. This was ancient.

Among other things, Bear as the loving, self-sacrificing husband implies that matriarchy is deeply embedded in ancient cultural impulses, not quite lost to Indigenous cultures. Clearly, the philosophical structure underpinning the connection between women and bears goes back past antiquity and almost past memory. The purpose of this book is to reconsider those linkages, drawing them into the clear light for reconsideration in the dire present, for they come from a once equally dire past. Scientists now are fairly certain from evidence in Greenland that a meteorite hit the earth 12,900 years ago wreaking climatic havoc for the next thousand years. This meteor swarm is now thought to have triggered the major cooling of the earth called the Younger Dryas, which lasted till around 11,700 years ago.[14] Neither was the Greenland meteorite the first "dragon of discord," as the Iroquois call their "white panthers" (comets or meteors).[15] For instance, the Amguid meteorite hit southwestern Algeria 100,000 years ago.[16] Fire Dragons seem not only to be more frequent (geologically speaking) but also more dangerous to humanity than gradualism would have it. It is fairly certain that, during the Younger Dryas, human populations took a stiff hit, suffering a significant drop.[17] Anything this big has major social realignments accompanying its physical impact.

Depictions of Bear in cave drawings and etchings abound. They were not made as "art" but for a reason. Tales of the Woman Who Married the Bear abound in North America, while stories of the Bear wife also show up in Finland and across the Eurasian north to Siberia and south to Armenia. Echoes of it even reverberate in Israel. Although in those regions, men are more likely to marry the tiger or the reindeer than the North American deer, the Woman Who Married the Bear remains constant across the global north. Given the spread and age, the Bear wife is the most ancient of tales, harking back to a very early period, before the Younger Dryas, before the Fire Dragon of discord hit the Northern Hemisphere and the once-pleasant land turned so cold and stark that the people, now huddled in small remnant bands, wore furs and lived in caves to survive, where the women mediated with Bear through gifts, and Bear sacrificed himself for love of his wife.[18]

To date, taking Indigenous American tradition seriously as a source of information has been taboo in scholarly circles. Tradition is undatable and unreliable, we are solemnly assured. As recently as 2005, in expert testimony taken during hearings on a proposed amendment to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA), the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs heard that, as part of the "genera of oral tradition," the "least factually reliable folk narratives" were "myths," as they concern only fabulous matters like "creation" or "metaphysical questions." They were, therefore, safely ignored, as they were little more than psychological symbols and thus "should not be treated as historical narrative."[19] Similarly, scholars have urged caution over the lack of event datability in oral tradition. "Many moons ago" as a time marker will, we are told, yield naught but "cosmic perspective," for lack of actual "dates or count years."[20]

As a summary of Western catechism about time, this cannot be beat, but as a test of tradition, it is flatly wrong. The Euro-vision here ignores that time, per se, is a Western cultural invention, a social control mechanism designed to seal human experiences off from one another in the epochal categories so dear to Euro-scholarship. For Indigenous Americans, all time is, indeed, simultaneous, just as all distance is spatial.[21] This does not mean, however, that we do not know the difference between yesterday at a friend's house and five hundred years ago in a big canyon. Pretty much, people do. If one knows how to hear tradition, markers of time and place appear. This was how, for instance, it was possible in 1997 to date the founding of the League of the Haudenosaunee to 1142 CE. Tradition mentioned several details that were eminently dateable using traditional time measurements —palisades, the

number of chairmen since the League's founding, the fact of how high the corn was at the time, and so on. Place was also discernible in the memory of the Black Sun (eclipse) that covered all of Iroquoia.[22] Anyone with an ear to hear detail could, and Jerry L. Fields and I did, pick up on these clues and use them to identify the date and geographical locale of the League's founding.

Oral tradition can be tested using four criteria: consistency, conformity, context, and corroborating evidence. Internal consistency considers whether an individual tradition is unswerving. Its details complement one another. Conformity references whether the same occurrence is described in the same way in various independent versions of the tradition. Context looks at the cultural attitude toward the tradition to see whether it is otherwise authenticated through, for instance, regular ceremony, recital, practice, law, or other authority within the culture. Finally, researchers consider whether tidbits within the tradition coincide with other types of records: geological, historical, geographical, and so on.[23] With these techniques, we can peer into traditions about the Woman Who Married the Bear. In Indigenous North America, things belong to Blood (earth, water) or Breath (sky, air), and in powerful instances of boundary-crossing, to both simultaneously.[24] Bear is one such boundary-crosser, and like all boundary-crossers, merits close notice. When Bear and Woman keep popping up together, something profound is a-paw, so it behooves us to perk up.

Kaarina Kailo

What would my grandfather Muffa think, if he knew the outcome of the bear stories that he told me as a child? Maybe he does know, up there somewhere in the Great Bear. He saved a friend's life by shooting a brown bear whose bearskin ever since has hung on the wall of our extended family summer cottage on an island in Finland (Fig. I.1). He introduced me to what the Sami call "traditional ecological knowledge" by role-modeling how to live in balance with nature in, among other things, the fish we caught and ate. He taught us to throw the fishbones back in the lake so they would come back to life. He donned a special outfit as King of the Mountain, *Fjällkungen*, and danced for us on a hill, throwing us gifts. He also told me not to turn little stones without taking into account that under them there might live all kinds of ants and little things. Neither was I to throw hot water on the ground without warning the *maahinen* (elves) first.

Figure I.1 The bearskin belonging to the author's grandfather, hanging on the wall of the extended family's summer place, located at Salonsaari, Kouvola, Finland—with "Kouvola" meaning "the place of the Bear."
Photograph by Kaarina Kailo, July 2022.

My research into bear lore and, later on, matriarchy began when I worked in Canada, where I had followed my sister as a landed immigrant. The 1990s were an era of big shifting in women's studies in Canada, following the Oka Crisis, when the Mohawk of Kanesatake, Quebec, asserted their rights to sacred land on which Euro-settlers had decided to build a golf course. From July 11 to September 26, 1990, the Mohawk faced off against Quebec's police, the Canadian Mounties, and the Canadian army.[25] As a Finnish immigrant, teaching at Concordia University, I had landed in the midst of the furious whirlwind of students protesting the Euro-Canadian, colonial, exclusionary academic curricula that silenced First Nations. I joined the students in the radical revision of course descriptions, full of violent epistemic bias. The outrageously racist acts against those Mohawk living outside of Montreal triggered this minirevolution, so I became only too eager to begin integrating Indigenous content into all course offerings, arranging for Indigenous women to co-teach or outrightly teach courses at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute of Concordia University.

As I had already begun to collaborate with Sami ("Lapp") women in my own home country of Finland in order to raise awareness about their plight as an internally colonized group, I invited in Elina Helander of the Nordic Sámi Institute as a lecturer. I was also able to use the funding I received as assistant professor to invite Rauna Kuokkanen, a Sami student, to engage in Native American and women's studies at Concordia University. As a result of all this, it became possible for me to form research networks involving First Nations students, who began to study their communities from their own point of view. I also collaborated with Kuokkanen and Helander regarding the Sami, and we launched the first postcolonial study in Finland on and by the Sami.[26] What today is referred to as "intersectional feminism" developed at least in part from the rightful rage of this era's wo/men in North America, whose paradigm shift (and whose rhetoric) slowly made its way to Europe.

Today, however, I look back on academia's queer- and sexuality-oriented focus in gender studies from a very different perspective. Its partly neoliberal focus has become much more multiethnic and broad than it was originally, but it has not simultaneously become deeper than it was. Insufficiently ecological, holistic, and radical, it now seems to cooperate with today's dysfunctional, schizoid, and violent race to the bottom, at least in Europe. How different would women's studies be, I wonder, were it less engaged in Euro-formed thinking, especially in its patriarchal conventions of academic research? What if it adopted, instead, something of the Indigenous type of grounded, eco-responsible approaches that act as if the future of the planet mattered?

Despite some progress, the failure to listen to Indigenous voices or to take seriously their gifts of knowledge has contributed to the collective inability to find sustainable solutions to the era's crises of democracy, of ecology, and of climate change. My encounter with Sami, Cree, and other First Nations activists turned me into an academic oddity. I began researching the spirituality of Bear when few feminists could fathom what on earth it had to do with world improvement, the peace movement, feminism, and all the genuinely serious issues women have to deal with today.

During her fieldwork and interviews with Sami *ofelas* (pathseekers) in Sápmi (Samiland), Elina Helander—shaman, artist, researcher, and one-time head of the Sámi Research Institute in Kautokeino, Norway—took me to the holy mountains, the fells in Samiland. She subjected me to all kinds of tests, like climbing up a steep ridge, an ascent that still has me

reeling with fear. She wanted me to see Sápmi uniquely meaningful, natural formations and spend time in special spaces off the trodden path. We spent a night in a tent on top of one sacred mountain, taking refuge from a nasty rain that, at first, made the experience anything but spiritual and uplifting. Our tent was pitched next to a weather station that had all its doors and windows nailed shut against us. That night, I had one of my big, mind-altering dreams, perhaps my equivalent of Barbara's encounter with the grizzlies.

I dreamed that, as I stood inside the weather station, all of the shut windows opened suddenly. I was in a kitchen full of wonderfully delicious, aromatic herbs and spices, the space transforming from an anemic weather broadcast station into a nourishing cooking site. Pots and pans steamed, full of porridge, stews, and soups, while happy bears danced merrily outside in front of the windows, spinning in all four directions. They smiled and asked me to dance, too. This dream was followed by others featuring bears who invited me to their den, where I found beans, mushrooms, and berries.

The dreamscapes felt emotionally, psychically, and spiritually healing and strangely relaxing. The bears were helping me heal from academic burnout, nudging me to go in search of rejuvenating sauna sweats. I began researching sweat baths and bears. I sought out every sauna I could find in Montreal. When I threw water on the rocks (a no-no in Canada), hotel security promptly arrived to give me and my Indigenous friends Euro-hell. They wanted to throw out the Cree, but not me, assuming that the Cree must have caused the fire alarm to go off. Too many Westerners are so far removed from the cave, the den, and the womb of rebirth that they do not recognize hot steam as the very essence of the spiritual experience!

The dreams felt completely real, as if another world flowed like meady memories and honey into my everyday life. I decided to dedicate myself to ecomythology in my search for Bearadise. The bears beckoned me so strongly that I have pursued this "line of research" ever since, relegating the emotionally anemic, life-denying, spiritually starved academia (Mann's yakademia) to the back burner.[27] The arid weather station broadcasting nothing but messages of colonial patriarchy were transformed in my life into a steamy lair of bear-woman narratives. As a recovering yakademic emerging from the sterile world of competition and ego-based and market-oriented research, I rediscovered traditional ecological knowledge of northern peoples, from the Finns and the Sami to other Finno-Ugric peoples and Indigenous North

Americans, to mention some of the groups that I have researched and/or visited.

A Northern Phenomenon

So why the Woman Who Married the Bear? Stories of Bear wives are widely known and disseminated across the Northern Hemisphere, from North America, Greenland, and Scandinavia across Russia, Korea, and even Japan (among the Ainu). They are especially common among Indigenous North Americans, Finns, Samis, and other Finno-Ugric peoples in Russia. The Bear wife epitomizes the interdependency of humans and other species, while forming the matrix of Indigenous ecomythology.[28] Bear narratives allow us to retrace our steps back toward the archaic beginnings of human spirituality.

This book explores the many meanings of Bear spirituality, how it is defined and what methods help tease new horizons from under the weight of history and the layers of Euro-formed claims. The added value is making visible rich traditional ecological knowledge, including Original Instructions, before they were denatured into dogmatic religious prescriptions by Christian impositions but while they were still the key element of ancient thought and science. The book also reveals what we consider to be the differences of collective ethos, the Gift and Master imaginaries, the latter also a kind of juridical imaginary. This ecosocially sustainable knowledge and worldview is needed in today's lopsided world whose tree of life was chopped at its trunk and pushed off its axis, onto the ground and left to rot.

When the Iroquoian *Awenhai*, the ancient body, *Ataensic*, the mature flowers—Sky Woman—first arrived in orbit, in that time before knowing when the earth was solely a water planet, the reason she came crashing to earth to found Turtle Island was that the *Hadíoyágeono*, the Sky People, had toppled the tree connecting the top and bottom of *Karionake*, Sky World. Although the toppling had looked like a good idea at the time, it turned out to be a terrible idea, which had the effect of disrupting *Karionake* entirely.[29] By the same token, the toppling of our brothers, the Guardians of the land, the trees of the forest, has been a dreadful disaster, bringing to its knees the planet so carefully constructed by *Awenhai* and her beloved daughter, the Little Lynx, *Katsitsioniionde*, the earth whose fruits hung low in their ripeness in the first cycle.

Putting the world back together requires humanity to recover the sacred, its Original Instructions. Much of that first order attached to the concept of woman. Importantly, no one was born woman but became woman through her marriage to Bear, the natural world. By compiling what remains of the original stories, we seek the Original Instructions that were foolishly discarded in the rush to embrace delusions of human grandeur as somehow separate from and higher than the environment.

Another obstacle to comprehension has been the patriarchal lens. In yakademia, the Eurocentric, monotheistic, and masculated bias prevailed in cultural studies till nearly the close of the twentieth century.[30] Indigenous spirituality was unceremoniously presented as something to be discredited, with one Smithsonian anthropologist declaring (as part of his 1887–1888 report) that only after the "medicine man" had been made "an object of ridicule" could Euro-Americans "hope to bend and train the mind of our Indian wards in the direction of civilization."[31] Matriarchy was openly ridiculed as fantasy, possibly because Marxism busily touted it as a "primitive" form of socialism.[32] By the outset of the twenty-first century, however, matriarchy had gained recognition as an extant cultural structure whose social, economic, political, and spiritual aspects could be anthropologically studied and described without cultural rivalry.[33] Today, matriarchy and its spiritual imagery are considered full-fledged areas of study.[34]

There remains, however, a reluctance to make room for an Indigenous and woman-positive perspective. To avoid one-sided and reductive views of the bear cult, it is necessary to apply modern gender-sensitive approaches to the research borrowed from today's matriarchal, archaeomythological, and Indigenous studies. This book thus explores what emerges from the deep, neglected stratum of the Paleolithic and Neolithic, when both Bear and Mother seem to have been common spiritual foci across the global north.

There is increasing evidence that it became a developed philosophy in Indigenous North America. Dipping into our respective toolkits, we look to bring new perspectives together with emerging research. In Europe and Eurasia, it brings up new data on the Great Mother or Ancestral Deity who was evoked by Marija Gimbutas as a set of matristic goddesses. In Indigenous America, similar evidence emerges of the Bear interface with the wife-mother, sometimes embodying all three in one. The widely spread narrative of the Woman Who Married the Bear, now wrongly situated within the context of masculated bear mythology, must be sifted free of the backgrounding that has silenced its wife-mother aspects.

To accomplish this deep dive into sifting, we scour traditions culled from old tomes as found in various archives and other repositories from the Americas, Scandinavia, Russia, and Armenia, scraping off the overlay of the later ages, in the foreign and damaging interpretations thrust upon them over time, looking for their original patina as best it can still be made out. The consistent patterns that emerge in the multiplicity of stories will be analyzed in search of their original purposes and meanings, again looking for the contiguities among them. Although the research for this book will include complete citations, the writing style will depart from the detached jargon of yakadementia. The point of the Woman Who Married the Bear is to benefit all, not to obscure all, so that obfuscation is jettisoned in favor of language accessible to every reader. At least some of the time.

This book is separated into this introduction, followed by two parts, the first in North America, and the second mostly in northern Europe and Eurasia. Part I, chapter 1, focuses on Indigenous tradition and its antiquity regarding women and bears, while Part I, chapter 2, looks closely at the brief Bölling–Allerød warming before it was so rudely interrupted by the comet swarm of 12,900 Before Present (BP), occasioning reorganizations through the Younger Dryas and beyond. In addition, the influxes and social impacts of various hominid populations starting before the comet swarm are examined for their contributions.

Part II, chapter 3, surveys particularly Scandinavian, Finno-Ugric, Celtic Irish, Russian, and other northern traditions of women and bears in their antiquity. It looks at the work already begun by various scholars on the meaning of bear, women, water, and caves and seeks to situate it in context of the Original Instructions. Part II, chapter 4, then ponders how the Woman Who Married the Bear came to be reviled under the new patri-spiritual regimes set forth under Bronze Age patriarchy.

In the conclusion, the authors analyze the joint data for commonalities, in search of plenary meaning of the Bear wife across the Northern Hemisphere. Mann continues her exploration of ancient humans in the Americas, including the clash of the "giants" and the "shorties," considering how bears transmuted into tall human men wearing bearskins and the impact of this on traditional understandings. Kailo tackles the sociological ramifications of Bronze Age disrespect for Mother along with its ecological implications in the treatment of "Mother" earth, and how for the sake of survival, understanding might turn back to the Original Instructions.

PART I

INDIGENOUS NORTH AMERICA AND THE YOUNGER DRYAS

The thrust of the Bear Wife of the Indigenous American story changed dramatically between the Bölling–Allerød warming and the Younger Dryas, because survival following the sudden climate disaster forced the alteration.

1

Messengers of Sky

A Traditional Overview

by Barbara Alice Mann

Bears are people, too.

In the long-ago, the Woman Who Married the Bear promised life. Mother Bear modeled parenting through her cubs, while her Bear husband modeled the gift of himself for the continuance of the female and the rising generations. Woman's centrality to incarnation, procreation, and resuscitation continuously circled the central message that life regenerates, regardless of the species or the perceived boundaries dividing them. Attached to stars and earth, Bear's story links the patterns of stars in the Breath of Sky to the matching pattern of seasons in the Blood of Earth.

In the closer-to-now, a second theme crept into the Woman Who Married the Bear, altering the original to transform the bear into prey, his wife into danger, and their lives as forfeit. Some of this deformation occurred for reasons that will be explored in the next chapter, but the rest was supplied by the interpolations of Western ethnology with its Eurocentric assumptions about male over female. Oblivious that men kept men's tales, as told to men, whereas women kept women's tales, as told to women, male ethnographers almost exclusively did the "collecting," skewing the content, proportions, and meaning of Bear marriage.

Sky Bear

In most traditions, Bear comes from sky to animate earth life, in the unique Indigenous American understanding of covalence in the Twinned Cosmos of Breath/Air/Sky complementing Blood/Water/Earth.[1] Breath takes precedence in outer space, but on planets, Blood takes the upper hand. If the scales are tipped to men while they are walking the stars, then authority resides

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with women while their feet walk *yöëdzade'*, that land, there, Planet Earth.[2] This little water planet is a drop of women's amniotic fluid giving endless birth to landscapes that grow and change, to all species of plants and animals that belong in the ground, on the ground, and above the ground.

The Breath realm of outer space endlessly spirals out vast possibilities from *gajíso:dánohoh* ("it is full of stars," the "Milky Way"). Although Breath is unable to create new life, it does provide cosmic semen to the amniotic droplets, the water planet, from which to build life. When space debris "breathes" on the water planet, things spring into new being, with consciousness attached.[3] "Breath" is generally connected to fertilization, so that in the Menominee creation story, the Sky spirit first breathed on earth, awakening her to being.[4] In the Iroquoian story, Sky Woman, the First Mother, Atensic (*Atahensic*) became pregnant when her husband *Hao^{n}iiweñdjiawagi* ("He Holds It, the Earth") breathed on her.[5]

As a symbol of the sky's seasons, Ursa Major was called the Bear long before the arrival of any European.[6] One prairie representation of Sky Bear going through his seasons exists in the Marching Bear Effigy Mounds, just north of Marquette, Iowa. The complex of ten bears replicates the "Big Dipper" circling Star Boy (Polaris), marking the procession of the seasons of earth in sky. The rectangle of the "dipper" is the bear's body. The Indigenous version of Ursa Major includes seven stars trailing the four of the rectangle. The seven are typically regarded in later tradition as hunters. Monitoring the Marching Bears are three birds in flight. In Sky World, behind and above the birds is the opening of the bear's den (the Corona Borealis). In the spring, the Bear is high in the sky, with his "den" just above, so that it seems as if Bear has just emerged from this "hole" (cave, den), following hibernation.[7]

The three birds in flight following the Marching Bears of the Iowa mounds are described by the National Park Service as "hawks."[8] In a Mi'kmaq ("Micmac") story recorded in 1691, the birds are canoers "guarding" Polaris as the hunters track the bear—which they never catch.[9] In the Mi'kmaq version recorded in 1900, the story has changed. Now, the seven hunters—the seven stars of the Big Dipper's "handle"—are identified as birds of prey. The four in the rear fall away from the chase. Of the three successful birds, only one brings down the bear.[10] The Seneca call the hunting party of seven *Niagwai hadishe*, "Bear, They Are Pursuing It."[11] In the general Iroquoian versions of this tradition, the four hunters falling behind are murdered by a "monstrous stone giant," which clearly identifies the hunter version as a later tradition (as I explain in the next chapter).[12] In some traditions, only three

hunters fail.[13] Off the shoulder of Mizar, the second star-hunter following Bear, is the tiny star Alcor. Depending on the tradition consulted, Alcor is either a cooking pot carried by one hunter, or a little sister of the hunters, as in the Secwepemc, Nuxalk, and Nlakapamuk traditions recounted below.[14]

The Cherokee version of the seven hunters has them as humans who had killed and partially eaten a large bear, before packing up the rest of his meat to take home with them (their pack being Alcor). As they trudged along, the incline of the land swerved upward, taking them high into the sky, dooming them forever to follow Sky Bear in his seasonal peregrinations around Polaris.[15] The implication of this story is that the hunters had failed to acknowledge the Breath Bear ancestor, before going off to hunt him, so their reward is death.[16] An Inuit tradition parses out the story a bit differently, with the three hunters closely pursuing the bear being lifted into the sky as Orion's Belt, while the pursued Bear becomes Betelgeuse, the right point of Orion's shoulder.[17]

The Marching Bear Mounds are not the only structures honoring Star Bear tradition. In the Vilas Mounds three miles south of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin—unfortunately since destroyed—a sixty-two-foot-long bear effigy lay along the east-west axis, the "direction of the sky."[18] Alas, the direction in which the bear was traveling was not recorded before its destruction, but it is well known that Ursa Major appears to travel in the sky from east to west, the male direction.[19] Similarly in Wisconsin, the Adrian Group of Mounds, also now destroyed, featured two bears, back to back along the North-South axis, both facing south, probably indicating Bear's back-to-back, southern-"facing" positions in midsummer (men's time of the year) and midwinter (women's time of the year).[20]

There are also rock carvings of Marching Bear, such as those in the Enchanted Mountains of Union County, Georgia, where etchings of tracks are carved into the stone, including both human and bear tracks, likewise documenting Bear's annual trek. One hundred and thirty-six sets of prints were documented in 1871 (including tracks of some postcontact creatures).[21] Such carvings are found across North America, with another group of carved human and grizzly tracks near Benton, California, both leading off in the same direction.[22] The mundane interpretation is that hunters are tracking Bear, but Indigenous interpretations are about the seasonal march of Sky Bear, circling Sirius, who is sometimes male and sometimes female, depending on the tradition. Bear's cycle is replicated on earth as the seasonal march. (See Fig. 1.1.)

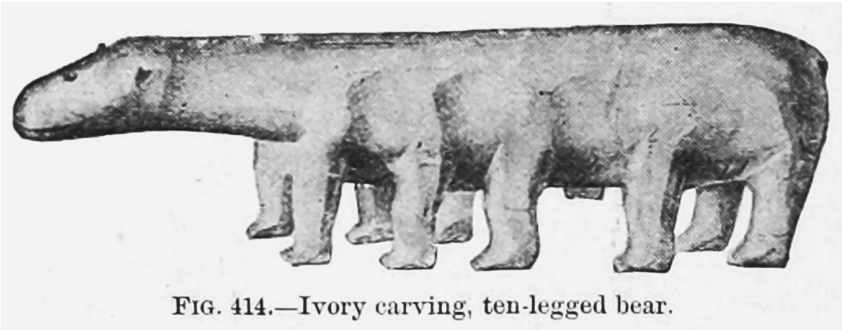

Figure 1.1 Multiple legs as marching motif. Carving in ivory of ten-legged bear from Nuwuk, Point Barrow, Alaska. Date unknown.

Source: John G. Murdock, "Ethnological Results from the Point Barrow Expedition," in *Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Smithsonian Institution, 1887–88* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1892), 406. Image used courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

Among ordinary spirits, there are those belonging properly to each cosmic half, but the strongest few spirits can cross the boundaries of Blood and Breath to become permanently incarnated potencies in both places. They may remain on this water planet, but they still can and do access Breath abilities. Bear is one such boundary-crossing spirit, coming from Sky but bonding with Earth.[23] If he is visible in Sky as Ursa Major, then on earth, the Bear often helps guard the four directions, as he does for the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago).[24]

For the Cherokee, White Bear is "chief" of the Bear council of elder spirits.[25] This is significant. First, "white" is associated with inside and peaceful things on Turtle Island. Second, White Bear is the Star Man, showing up in Tuscarora tradition, as aiding hunters (Breath) against the Great Variegated Lizard, *Roquaho* (Blood), whom the hunters at first mistook for a bear from claw marks they had been tracking. Turning on his pursuers, *Roquaho* began killing the hunters, one by one, transporting their limp bodies to his tree lair. Shape-shifting into the Breath Twin *Tarachiawagon*, Bear came to the rescue of the surviving hunter. (Shape-shifting always indicates great potency of spirit.)[26] When *Roquaho* approached, the Breath Being transmuted back into his basic form, the Great White Bear of the sky. Between them, the remaining hunter and White Bear prevailed against *Roquaho*.[27] It is not surprising, then, to find Bear "cave dwellings" in high places, such as the cliff caves at the Canyon de Chelly in northeastern Arizona. The ruins include

numerous kivas, or sunken round-houses, which typically include a sipapu, or hole drilled down, a vaginal opening from which being emerges (think vaginal canal).[28]

Like every other living thing on earth or, at least, on Turtle Island, Bear incarnate has both a Spirit of Breath, which lives in his lungs, and a Spirit of Blood, which dwells in his heart, so that he is presented as having two origin stories.[29] In his Spirit of Breath, Bear is a Messenger of Sky who, say the Algonkin, "reasons as well as a man."[30] In his Spirit of Blood, Bear is a Keeper of Renewal, rebirth (after hibernation). For all his earthly existence, though, Bear always originates in Sky, that is, he is an Old One, an elder spirit. For the Onondaga, Bear is one of the "man-beings," or sky spirits, who visited human ceremonies connecting the animals in their Breath being to their Blood, or the "presence of their kinds in the new world beneath the sky land" on Turtle Island. For the Cherokee, each core of consciousness, including the constellations, had its "Man Being" spirit, which visited the water planet, when breathing life upon it was first contemplated.[31]

When things move in this way between realms, there are ceremonies. Breath ceremonies start in the sky, honoring all the Man Beings in order of their descent to earth. First, "Deer beings came," arriving just a hop ahead of Bear.[32] *Ógwaí óni waha-gwáthwă*, Bear, also he visited there, say the Onondaga.[33] The Osage keep a similar tradition of Bear coming to earth from outer space, having specifically volunteered to be a "messenger," traipsing about "different stars for aid." It was, however, Grandmother Red Bird who gave all the spirits their human bodies, "making them out of her own body," a common story.[34]

In the 1850s, Ho-Chunk traditionalists of Wisconsin described humans as originating in Sky World—just not as humans.[35] As told by *Shogonikkaw* ("Little Hill") of the Ho-Chunk, the earth incarnation occurred originally in Bear form at "Red Bank," along the shores of Lake Michigan, north of Green Bay, Wisconsin.[36] The oldest traditionalist interviewed, *Tawneenukkaw* added that this did not happen until after the *Wákąčąka* ("Holy Ones"), themselves, were fashioned. Only then were creatures, both female and male, crafted in Sky World and sent down to earth as Bear. Thereafter, a female hominid was made "from a she-bear," and a male hominid "from a he-bear."[37] In other words, old forms transmuted into new forms, shape-shifting to fit this environment. For the Osage, Grandfather *Wabaha* ("Litter," Ursa Major) "stands in the midst of the heavens," from which he is called down to earth. Humans are his "little ones," to whom he gives permission to use his likeness

in creating their "symbol" (clan totem). He also confers his invisibility on them. With it, no one will be able to track them, nor to "cross their path," nor to stop them in their "going."[38]

The Woman of Earth and the Bear of Sky

The upshot of creation is that earth is a woman, made for a woman, and Sky Bear is her consort. Sex is not the base structure of relations but merely one of many replications of the Cosmic Twinship.[39] Unlike monotheistic creation, which was about perfection realized physically, Indigenous creation is about how things were sorted out, after a blundering start. Moreover, Indigenous women tell women's tales to women, while Indigenous men tell men's stories to men, instead of men, alone, in charge of the all-story. These important facts are unfortunately obscured by Western ethnology, which inserted into the traditions it "collected" its own patriarchal assumptions of male creation leading to a male rule, whose over-voice controlled a universal "battle of the sexes."

This mismatched approach deformed a Secwepemc (Shuswap) tale of shifting menstruation, for instance, as filtered through the patriarchal consciousness of James Alexander Teit (1864–1922) and Franz Uri Boas (1858–1942). In the Secwepemc story, it was first men, not women, who did all the menstruating, but periods proved inconvenient for men out hunting, so Coyote rectified the situation by throwing menarche blood onto the women instead. Thus, women, not men, now menstruate monthly.[40] Both Teit and Boas jointly presented Coyote as having righted a bloody wrong against *men*.

An off-kilter creation had, indeed, been righted, but it was not about patriarchy. It was about situating activities in their proper cosmic half. First, Coyote is generally hazardous to men. Second, Breath does not play with Blood, nor does Blood play with Breath, so that the impropriety of the mistake was in *male* menstruation.[41] Consequently, the wrong that Coyote righted was *on behalf of the women*. Mere exposure to menstruating women kills men, including male Breath giants, making them vomit blood and collapse, but thrown on women, *Blood makes life*.[42] Because Coyote resituated Blood where it belonged, it was now through the women, alone, that children were to be pulled from the women's earth, which is made of their lineage ancestors, the first five feet down.[43] Original tradition portrayed men as

grieving that they, too, could not pull new life out of their own bodies. This lack is why men sweat; it is their menses.[44]

As we saw, invisibility is a Breath trait passed by sky bears to men. It connects with the color blue, itself indicative of the cessation of existence on this water planet.[45] Consequently, one must fly to outer space to reach Seneca Land in Blue Sky, a Breath-death journey, for death is what confers invisibility on everyday folks.[46] Blue also associates with mystery or secrecy. Hence, the Kituhwa Society of the Cherokee, a secret group resisting Euro-invasion, was called the "Blue Lodge."[47] Blue can be associated with danger, as well, which is why "black" wampum is actually dark, purplish blue.[48] Finally, blue is associated with glaciers and with Blue Bear, an arctic bear that Native Americans talked about but which Westerners waved off as imaginary—until one was taken alive near Jakutat Bay, Alaska, and added to the Smithsonian's "collection" in 1918.[49] (Apparently, nothing is "true" until a Westerner says it is.)

Sky may be the province of men, but once on earth, even messengers of sky appropriately become associated with female fertility.[50] Consequently, Bear regularly emerges from a "hole" in the earth, that is, a den or a cave, which entails obvious references to a womb birthing him through its vaginal canal.[51] Caves in the natural shape of wombs were used as sacred spaces by Indigenous Americans. In 1926, local Euro-residents took it upon themselves to excavate Lake Pepin's Lundberg Cave in Minnesota, pulling Indigenous remains from the ground to send to the University of Minnesota for study (although they would be practically worthless, thus removed from situ). Having seen the remains and confirmed that they were human, anthropologist Albert Ernest Jenks visited the site in person in 1927, performing his own excavations.[52] Interestingly, the human remains had entered the deposit site along with a water stream "through vertical joints"[53]—like reverse fallopian tubes recycling Blood Earth spirits. Were this the only example of the Indigenous use of womb-shaped imagery in a death/rebirth ritual in bear-space, I might chalk it up to coincidence, but there are other womb-shaped caves deliberately used this way, including Olentangy Caverns in Ohio.[54] The womb properties of caves are why so many are used for burials: women are inviting rebirth through bear power.[55] (See Fig. 1.2 and Fig. 1.3.)

The bear's times of year are clearly female-associated as well. Star-wise, Indigenous women connect closely with the Seven Sisters (the Pleiades), who mark women's three times of the year. The Sisters appear at planting time, mid-April into May, in the women's half of the sky, with their second appearance in the third week of October, which is harvest time. Their third

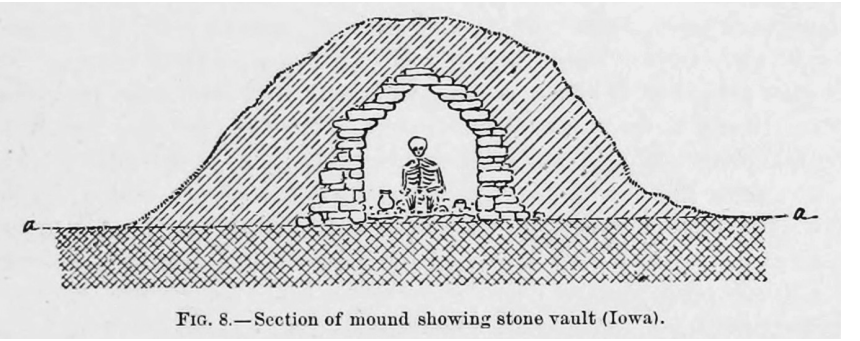

Figure 1.2 Stone mound burial showing an example of a Bear-Man burial configuration, ca. 500 BCE.

Source: Cyrus Thomas, "Burial Mounds of the Northern Sections of the United States," in *Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1883–84* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1887), 31. Image used courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

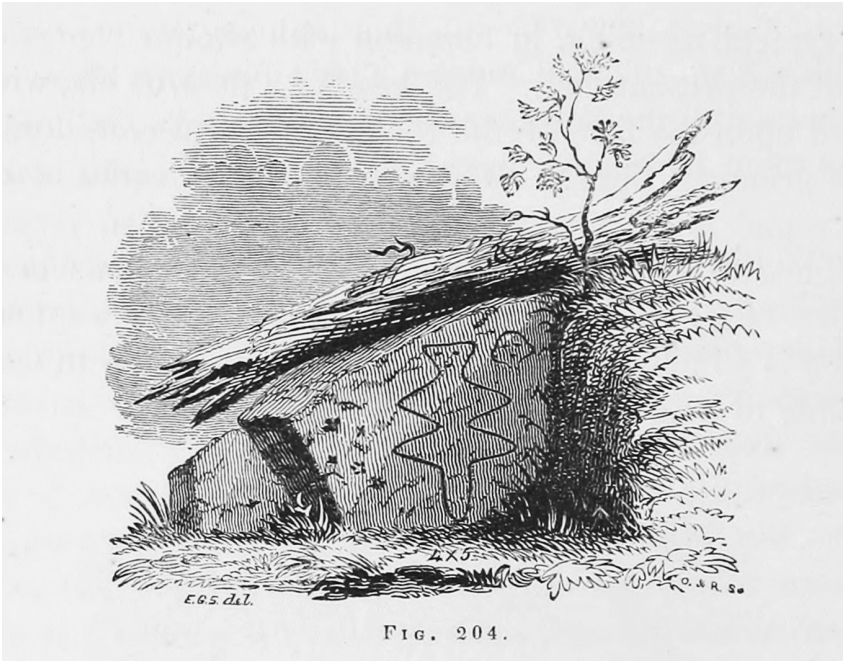

Figure 1.3 Bear man cave art. This depiction of a bear-man with a woman's face behind was found on the wall of a cave collapsed in Cabell County, Virginia. Archaeological illustration made in 1846 by E. G. Squier.

Source: Ephraim George Squier and Edwin Hamilton Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley: Comprising the Results of Extensive Original Surveys and Explorations* (New York: Bartlett & Welford; Cincinnati, OH: J. A. & U. P. James, 1848), Fig. 204, 296.

appearance comes in early January, women's reawakening time.[56] As spaced over nine months, this Pleiadean cycle is too clearly associated with human gestation to be missed by anyone paying attention. Indeed, bears start foraging in April, which is the women's planting season.[57] Just as tellingly, women's agricultural season emphasizes the first hoeing as occurring in June, just as the Grizzly Bear mating season peaks, while cubs are born in early January, the women's Midwinter festival, when Clan Mothers begin to check their seed corn for the next spring.[58]

Moreover, bears lengthen their lactation periods, nursing their cubs long enough to hold breeding to every other year.[59] Thus, on the one hand, bears modeled spaced pregnancies that ensured responsible parenting, followed on the other hand by rest for the mother. The habits of Indigenous American women mirrored these lessons. The matriarchal cultures of Turtle Island heavily frowned upon bearing a new child before the first child could take care of its own needs, at least in a basic way.[60] Women would deliberately nurse children up to four years, because prolonged lactation helps block conception by lengthening the period of postpartum amenorrhea (absence of menstruation).[61] Finally, Indigenous women used herb and root decoctions to "cut the strings in the womb," that is, to abort an unwanted fetus.[62] Interestingly, recent research suggests that one effect of the Ice Age on Indigenous women in North America was to extend their lactation periods, like mother bears'.[63]

The proper care of children was a theme of bear tales. The Seneca family of *Gaiänt'wake* ("Cornplanter") told of a young boy becoming lost during a hunt, with his fellow hunters leaving, when they could not find him. A "very kindhearted bear" saved the forlorn child, taking him with her to her hollow tree. (Hollow trees were included as bear "holes." See Fig. 1.4.) Knowing, however, that he would be "frightened to death" should he see her in bear form, she shape-shifted into a human woman. Accordingly, the child accompanied her home, where he played with her cub, also now human-formed. When spring arrived anew, so did the hunters, and because the boy was truly human, Mother Bear sent him back to his kin, but not before admonishing him "always [to] feel kindly toward the bear tribe." In response, as a man, he never killed a bear.[64] The skew to the Blood-Breath balance originally in bear tales is obvious here. In 1881–1882, this tradition was told to a female ethnologist, Erminnie Smith, so it concerns she-bears and children, not hunting, per se. That is, being female, Smith heard the Blood version, whereas male ethnologists heard only Breath versions.

Figure 1.4 Bear hugging tree.
Photograph by Susan Deer Cloud, June 2, 2022, Alaska. Used with permission.

Although the Iroquoian and Cherokee traditions emphasized deer as the "proper" prey for hunters, Bear was killed, at least following deep antiquity.[65] Still, bear meat was sacredly viewed by women. Among the Seneca, women used bear's oil reverently in cooking.[66] Typically, hunters left the downed bear at the outskirts of town, and only a woman was allowed to bring it in. Because of women's close connection with bears, the hunters' clanswomen, alone, could declare whether (or not) to share his meat and byproducts out to everyone.[67] Women alone also ran and populated the Bear Dance Society, although a Bear-Man was selected to make its address. (Speaking is a Breath-male duty; women appointed such speakers.)[68] Women of the Bear Dance Society honored Bear with a special, soft corn pudding, for corn is sweet, and Bear has a sweet tooth. The Bear Dance pudding is used only in ceremonials, and men do not taste it. Bear is in his medical capacity here; shamanistic, the society focuses on medicinal cures, especially for arthritis (a bane of hunters ignoring the rules).[69]

The Apache of the southeastern portion of North America would neither kill nor eat a bear, a sentiment shared by the Tlingit of the old Pacific Northwest coast, who regarded eating a bear as a type of cannibalism, because the bear was a human who had "taken the shape of an animal."[70] The Pomo of northern California had a similar aversion to eating grizzly bear meat, as the spirits of identifiable humans were seen to enter the bear. One old female grizzly with a very wrinkled face was believed in 1851 to have been inhabited by the Blood spirit of a local Grandmother who had passed away.[71] (Grandmother is a position title for a female elder.) Among the Arapaho, after having been bitten by a bear, a woman dreamed incessantly of Bear.[72] Dreams are messages connected with Blood, earth, and women. In both instances, Bear was speaking to women.

Bear was a food provider, either indirectly or directly. Indirectly, bears and humans share diets, so that anyone wandering into a new environment in which she was unsure of what plants and berries were edible had but to watch Bear.[73] In 1887–1888, the Apache noted that Hoddentin or cattail pollen was sacred because it was "good medicine for the bear, and that the bear liked to eat it," so that it was thrown to Great Bear, Ursa Major.[74] Several parts of cattail are also edible for humans.[75] Ceremonially, Bear thus became a provider of delectable foods.[76] As we have seen, lost human children were welcome to share dwelling space with bear cubs and mooch off their victuals. Bear gifting even reached Euro-Americans. While serving as an assistant surgeon in the US Army in New Mexico in 1852, Peter G. S. Ten Broeck observed a Moqui "clown" dance of the animals, which was interrupted when "a huge grizzly bear" (a dancer) rushed the clowns, who "killed" the bear, cutting open his "body" (bear suit) to reveal "a quantity of guavas, green corn, &c."—a feast for the assembly.[77] This last was obviously a men's event, witnessed by a Euro-male, yet, clearly, Bear is widely and closely associated with food, giving, and group survival.

Innumerable bear tales emphasize sharing with those in need. For instance, as recounted in 1907 by Blackbird, a Pembina Chippewa (White Earth Chippewa, "Gros Ventre"), a bear rescued a young girl who was accidentally left behind when her people moved. The child valiantly attempted to follow in her relatives' tracks, but too inexperienced to manage it, she instead plopped down on the ground, crying tears of despair. In pity, a "rich" bear called out to her by name, proposing to feed and care for her, so the girl began to make a tent. Approaching her in her task, the bear turned into a man, who "married" her. Now, noticing her absence, her people retraced their steps,

spotting her large tent. Three times they attempted to approach her, but she shooed them away. On their fourth try, they came to her crying, saying that they were "starving," so she let them in and fed them "dried meat." There is still no word on whether she returned home with them.[78] Because she was now in charge of her own lodge, my guess is that she did not.

This tradition is about the importance of, first, keeping an eye on the young during the commotion of going somewhere else and, second, sharing with those in need of succor. The "rich" bear's rescue of the desperate girl was an important lesson in the proper treatment of the helpless and the needy, and a lesson that she turned around and replicated when others came "crying" to her. Everyone Indigenous has the obligation to share what s/he has, particularly when someone else is seen to be in need. This was why during the American Revolutionary War, before sending the men to the local British fort, Great Lakes women would "tear off everything" from their backs to ensure that the men would arrive at the fort "Naked" and needing to be "Equip'd anew" by the British. The women did this to force the otherwise miserly British to ante up.[79] Such stinginess as the British exhibited violated every Indigenous rule, which required a "host," however ad hoc, immediately to supply food and lodging or be forever "termed a nobody."[80] Thus, the bear supplied the child and the child, her "starving" relatives. The four appeals were a reference to the sacred directions of earth, the same directions guarded by Bear.

In a human counterpart to the rich bear, women treat their bear relatives with equal loving kindness. In a touching tale from the Inuit recorded in the mid-nineteenth century, a lonely woman lacking any relatives took in a bear cub when it was only two or three days old.[81] Nursing him up from a tiny cub and naming him *Koonicjooa*, she taught him to hunt and fish for her. Acting the part of a good son, he brought seals and salmon straight to her, only taking "his share from her hands." (Clan mothers, alone, control the food supply.) For years, the pair were devoted to one another, but local Inuit men grew jealous of the cub-son's hunting prowess and determined to kill *Koonicjooa* for the high crime of showing them up.

Desperate to stop her son's murder, the woman offered her life in place of *Koonicjooa*'s, but the hunters stood adamant, so with "tears streaming down her face," she begged her beloved bear-son to flee. Caressing her in sorrow, *Koonicjooa* agreed, promising always to provide for her. Some time later, the Inuit woman was in great want because there was no one now to hunt for her. Walking out on the ice in search of *Koonlcjooa*, his adoptive mother found

him snuggling with another bear, but the moment she told him of her plight, he killed his own companion so that she might have food. He continued supplying her thereafter.

The notion of self-sacrifice is a common demonstration of love in traditional bear stories. Here, both the mother and her bear-son make great sacrifices for one another, because their primary obligation is to each other. A proper son always ensures that his mother is fed, while a proper mother will die to preserve the life of her child. Whether a child is adopted makes no difference—a really important principle for Indigenous Americans who legally replaced deceased loved ones with adoptees, who often came from an "enemy" camp. Although such adoptees might start out as "prisoners," once adopted, they became family members "on an equal footing" with children born into the group.[82] Thus, for instance, was *Deghewänis*, the settler child Mary Jemison who was taken in by the Seneca in 1755, treated with unfailing loving-kindness, even when maintaining her was dangerous for those who had adopted her.[83]

Similarly, in a well-known Wyandot tradition, here as told in English by Star Young in 1915, a little boy trapped in a cave was saved by Old Bear, who rolled away the huge boulder that was blocking the entrance. The child being too young to fend for himself, Old Bear then handed the child to Mother Bear, who had young cubs. She nursed the boy along with her cubs, teaching him as well as her cubs to hunt, fish, peal bark, and find berries. They were happy together, until human hunters came by and killed the boy's cub-brothers. In deep distress, the boy called for the hunters to let his sister, the remaining, small female cub, live. In deference to the boy, they did in the moment, but once he was with human relatives again, he was forced by his family to hunt his cub-sister. Refusing to eat any of her meat, he died in his sleep that night.[84]

In Woodlands cultures, men delivered all potential adoptees to the Clan Mothers, who decided on their adoption.[85] Modeling this law, the lost little boy had been formally handed to the clan-mother bear, who adopted and raised the child, whose group loyalty went to the Bears. As a result, seeing them killed was horribly traumatic for him. In pleading for the life of his cub sister, the boy was addressing a standing law, that hunters "never kill the mother-bear."[86] In any case, females are "Innocents," a legal Woodlands term for noncombatants. As such, women and girls were never to be killed, regardless of the circumstances.[87] This rule extended to female bears, because it was they who ensured the survival of all bears, just as human females ensured

the survival of their group. Consequently, the main point in all versions of this tale is for hunters "to refrain from killing female bears."[88] Whereas Westerners might assume that young man had died from the heartbreak of killing his sister (an individualist understanding), the Spirit of Bear took him for violating the law of Innocence (a communal understanding).

Bear Husbands and Grizzly Wives

Tales of intermarriage between bear men and human women abound in endless variations.[89] The basic story in the Pacific Northwest features a youthful, unmarried girl out picking berries or roots while her clan "brothers" are out hunting, so she may well be a "hunting wife," an unmarried woman accompanying the men as a camp worker.[90] In some versions, "rescued" women might actually become Bear. In a Tlingit set of bear-marriage stories, in not watching where she is walking, a young woman out alone looking for berries plants her foot directly in a heap of moist dung, loudly chastising whatever bear had deposited the pile, right there in the middle of the trail.[91] The next thing she knows, a handsome man stands in her path. Instead of directly confronting her for cursing him (a frequent variation), Bear man here *helps* her with her berries, which she continually spills—"because the bear wished it."[92] A woman spilling her berries meant that she was not very good at berrying, a basic task, so Bear man was shaming her in public—as she had just shamed him.

Because night was coming on, Bear man took the woman to his home, essentially a cave, passing numerous "people" along the way ("surely human beings," or so they appeared to her).[93] She did not catch on. ("Maybe he did something to her mind," quipped one Tlingit version.)[94] In still another version, when the woman became homesick, the bear "slapped her right on top her head" and circled it clockwise, which made her forget her home.[95] (Clockwise is the male direction appropriate to the brain, which is Breath-connected.) So far, using his spiritual potencies, Bear man made his wife see and experience what he wished her to see and experience. Interestingly, he instructed her not to look at him while he was asleep, suggesting that he had to be awake to confound her senses.[96]

This story is set amid bear mating season, so as the couple spend time together, moving from den to den before hibernating, the Bear wife finds she is pregnant, ultimately giving birth to two cubs.[97] Meantime, by making

kayani, or "magical leaves," her clan brothers seek the whereabouts of their missing clan sister.[98] The Bear husband is a good "dream doctor," however, so he knows that his wife's brothers are coming to kill him.[99] He instructs his wife to snag one of his body parts, which will magically feed his hungry cubs. Which part she is to take varies from version to version—being a skull here or a knee bone there.[100] (When details vary, listeners know that they are not the point of the tale. Here, sustaining the cubs is what matters, not the specific food.)[101] The whole time, the Bear wife fears that Bear will kill her clan brothers in self-defense, so she pleads with him not to harm them. The bear agrees to allow himself to be killed instead.[102]

In another twist on these tales, a woman's story from the Nlakapamuk people of British Columbia has a girl bring female bears home to marry her clan brothers.[103] With her little dog, a tiny girl named *Silolaxixtem* is out digging *skamitc*, while, in some versions, her four (or three) brothers hunt (all being clear references to the star configuration of Ursa Major).[104] *Skamitc* is the avalanche lily, which grizzlies and black bears prize as a treat.[105] Hearing the child's song, four (or three) female grizzly bears also out digging the root find *Silolaxixtem*, pulling her out of hiding and inquiring whether she has any marriageable brothers. Hearing that she has, they fill her little basket with *skamitc* and send her home with instructions that the brothers must eat the roots whole. The Grizzly sisters have secretly put a hair in each *skamitc*, to cause thirst.

Back at the camp, *Silolaxixtem* prepares the large roots for dinner, to the happy acclaim of her hungry brothers, but having devoured the hairy roots whole, each brother in turn needs water to wash down the irritant in his throat. When the first ventures out to the water for a drink, one of the Grizzly sisters grabs him in a huge bear hug, signifying courtship and marriage. Embarrassed, the hunter returns to the shelter, now engaged. Each brother is thus entrapped into bear marriage, as each goes out, in turn, for water. The elder brother invites the Grizzly sisters in, and now, they are all one big, furry, happy family.

Now, we find an ending that seems tacked on later, as this turns from a woman's life tale to a male tale of death. In this ending, the honeymoons do not last, as the eldest Grizzly sister kills her sisters and their husbands, leaving her own husband terrified enough of her to grab *Silolaxixtem* and run off. Eventually, he and *Silolaxixtem* marry and she has a baby. While she is singing to it one day, the eldest Grizzly sister hears the song and locates *Silolaxixtem*, whom she kills, along with the baby. When the hunter returns,

he finds his Grizzly wife singing to a board (probably the infant's cradle board), which she has disguised as the baby. More alarmed than ever, the husband tricks his Grizzly wife into going out for water, whereat he drowns her in a water hole as she stoops to fetch water. Deep water is frequently the nemesis of Bear, signifying Bear's Breath-Sky origins.

Whether killed or alive, in the three/four Grizzly marriages, we are going through the seasons, with each passing away as Ursa Major circles Polaris, giving rise to the next round, in a clear exposition of that circumpolar asterism. The stories of the bear drowning or the brother killing it may be about stars passing from visibility. Below the twenty-ninth parallel, Ursa Major dips below the horizon—say, into the ocean—although at that latitude, one is standing south of Orlando, Florida! Still, anyone in a mountainous region well north may also lose sight of Ursa Major stars behind the hills when the constellation lies close to the horizon in autumn.[106] Primarily, it is the "hunter" stars that disappear. Again, depending on latitude, three or four of the stars might vanish, accounting for the varying number of dead hunters in the traditions, which here included the Grizzly wives, also:[107]

The resuscitation of Bear after death is an important part of the original stories, too, with only the most recently recorded leaving out that particular. Euro-Americans are skittish about anything that seems to compete with their Jesus story, even killing people to silence rival stories.[108] Nevertheless, in the women's version, once dead, Bear may either stand up from under a leaf pile after the hunters leave, or reanimate from his skeleton, which is part of the widespread Iroquoian and Algonkin story of Ursa Major. Once the three successful hunters (birds) have eaten the she-bear, they leave her exposed skeleton to rise into the sky, where Bear reclines on her back all winter. When spring stars turn the Mi'kmaq female Bear's face to earth again, her Breath spirit enters another Bear, who is peacefully asleep in her den. Now, the action begins anew as Bear rises from hibernation, and the birds of prey, in an endless cycle, chase her around the circle of sky again.[109]

The multiplicity of full-bear skeletons that show up in burial mounds of the Ohio valley along with human burials address this idea of return. In 1887 in the Cherokee mounds in Wilkes County, North Carolina, a full-bear skeleton was found interred along with three human skeletons, in clear replication of this sky Bear story.[110] These full-skeleton burials are invitations to resuscitate.[111] The permanence of Ursa Major, visible in all seasons, is emblematic of Bear as never dead. Although Bear may die, the skeleton remains, so s/he will always resuscitate.[112]

In many of the stories of the Bear bride's (often forcible) return to her clan, she winds up wearing her dead husband's skin, an ominous development, as it begins her full transformation into a bear. In a Tlingit story, once back in their village, the men forced the Bear bride to wear her husband's bearskin and play-act bear for their amusement. This foolish demand would have sent chills down the spine of traditional listeners, as they would have known that wearing the bear robe would cause her to shape-shift into a bear, herself.[113] In a couple of versions, once the Bear bride has fled town to live as a bear, her own brother kills her, although whether knowingly or not is left up in the air.[114] By far, however, in most versions, Bear sister kills some or all of her brothers.[115]

A lengthy Secwepemc (Shuswap) story tells of one such woman who became a grizzly bear.[116] Out with her three sisters seeking cinquefoil root, she began to menstruate. Instead of going home to the communal moon lodge, she stayed behind digging up additional roots. Seeing her, a very handsome Grizzly Man shape-shifted into a human and approached her with a marriage proposal, to which she immediately assented. They walked and climbed till they came to his "hole" in a "high mountain." After a hearty dinner of honey, dried salmon, cinquefoil root, and hog fennel, they fell asleep without having had sexual relations, because it was not bear mating season.

As the Bear husband slept, the woman realized that her four brothers would come to look for her when she did not show up. However, bears can read thoughts, so her Bear husband growled each time she thought of her three older brothers, whereas when she thought of her littlest brother, Grizzly did not growl. Thus, she knew that Grizzly would be killed by that youngest brother. As she expected, her brothers searched for her in the spring, alighting on their sister's footprints just as she and Grizzly were waking up, both very thin. One by one, from eldest to youngest, her brothers attempted to shoot arrows into the cave, but their sister clasped the arrows to prevent their shots and forestall a kill. However, when her youngest brother aimed, she guided his arrow to Grizzly, who was shot dead. She took all the skin of Grizzly, and the group went home.

The Grizzly bride did not immediately return to town, however, but built a "small lodge" just outside of its precincts. Her only visitor was her smallest clan sister, sent to fetch for her. Grizzly bride thus acquired four arrowheads, which quickly became bear's teeth once she put them in her mouth. Donning her husband's Grizzly skin, she tried the strength of her new teeth, but they were loose. Undaunted, she made claws, too. When her little sister came by

again, she demanded raw salmon. Running home in a fright, the little girl told their mother of her sister's big teeth and claws, but Mother did not believe her.

Once the four brothers left on their next hunt, the Bear wife put on her Grizzly skin and killed all the people in town, her mother and three oldest sisters included, saving only her smallest sister, whom she carried off with her to the mountains, using her long hair to mop up her menstrual blood. Returning from their hunt to the devastation at home, the brothers heard Little Sister crying for help, so they hurried to the mountain, where they found her. Soon, the five of them had hatched a mutual plan to kill their Grizzly sister. Accordingly returning to the cave, Little Sister calmly fed Grizzly a grouse her brothers had given her. As bear, Grizzly wife had begun to read thoughts and felt that her brothers had supplied the grouse, but she ate it, anyway. Relaxing after her meal, Grizzly wife sat back, her arms and legs splayed. She was just dozing off as each brother shot through the hole, one arrow each penetrating each paw and killing their Grizzly sister. Skinning her, the brothers cut her up into little pieces that they dispersed about, sparing only the heart, which they hid in a birch bucket.

Their town destroyed, and all the clansfolk but themselves dead, the brothers built a new lodge for themselves and their little sister a short distance from the den. With no other women around, the brothers all married their younger sister, creating a baby. As they were establishing their new life, however, "with difficulty," the Grizzly wife "had gathered all her parts together, and become well again." Awaiting her chance, she watched the brothers leave again to hunt, at which time Grizzly killed her sister, making a good dinner of her. Then Grizzly picked up the baby to nurse it. When the brothers returned, she pretended to be Little Sister, but they had overheard her singing to the baby and recognized Grizzly's voice.

Acting as if they did not catch the sister switch, the brothers sat down to eat, asking for water, which Grizzly sister went to fetch. Quickly, the brothers put two flat rocks in the fire to heat. Four times, when Grizzly returned with water, they declared it too muddy, and sent her out again. During the fourth trip, the rocks were heated through. Fetching the hidden Grizzly heart, the brothers put it between the hot stones, where it sizzled and shriveled to ashes. Feeling her heart's distress, Grizzly sister attempted a return to the lodge in time to snatch what was left of her heart, for it contained her Blood spirit, but alas, she ran out of time and dropped dead before she arrived. The brothers

survived to take new wives in a different town before returning to their old lands with many new relatives.

A lot is going on in this tale, which, as recorded, was filtered through Western concepts and taken from male Secwepemc, so that much of the original intent is disturbed. Let us start with the shape-shifting by the original Grizzly bear into a handsome youth. The abilities to become invisible, to shape-shift, to read minds, and to control the thoughts of others are strong indications of spiritual potency. Bear possesses all of these abilities, and Grizzly bride is beginning to acquire them toward the end of the story. "Four" keeps showing up in the tale, too, in allusion to the four seasons, the four directions guarded by the four "soldier" bears, and the four sky positions of Ursa Major, annually.[117] Most importantly here, bears have four spirits.[118] Being the youngest, the last of the four brothers, confers a certain amount of Innocence on Bear bride's little brother, at least until he kills the Bear husband. Once more, though, four most potently refers to the shifting positions of Ursa Major, which was closely watched by essentially all Indigenous North American peoples because of its seasonal connections to hibernation, planting, and renewal.

Blood as connected with fertility is also present. In the opening, the women were digging cinquefoil (*Potentilla*) roots, but the leaves were what Grizzly woman sought once she stayed behind. This is because cinquefoil leaves yield an astringent that Indigenous women used to lessen menstrual blood flow, so obviously she was in her flow.[119] Importantly, common tradition holds that menstrual blood attracts bears through its hormonal odor, whereas it endangers human men as well as the giants of tradition.[120] Since 1979, it has been proposed among Western scientists that the odor of menstruation invokes reactions in both humans and bears; indeed, in animals in general. A 1979 study researched whether menstrual blood (as attached to a used tampon) attracted polar bears.[121] Both in the wild and in the laboratory, bears did respond to the tampon, selectively stopping, sniffing, and tracing the scent to its source. Further study was recommended.[122] In 1988, a master's thesis in science pinged predecessors on conflating attraction to menstrual odors with *attack* by bears on menstruating women, while deciding that the evidence, in any case, was inconclusive.[123] In 2006, there was another test, likewise inconclusive, with some species of bear perhaps responding, but with polar bears showing the least response in this test.[124]

Whatever the science, menstruation heightens the story's allusion to fertility, procreation, and continuance. With menstruation thought lethal

to men, human women isolated themselves in group moon lodges during menses to protect men and children.[125] The cinquefoil leaves, of which Grizzly man partook, indicate that the woman's menstrual blood had attracted the Bear man. The fact that Bear man approached the woman, menstruation notwithstanding, demonstrated his spiritual potency, which was uninjured by her menses. So far, this story could not be more intended as a woman's tale than it is.

The allusions continue: once Grizzly man had proposed, the newlyweds immediately retreated to a "hole"—*his* hole—with the aside that the pair did not engage in sex. This means that the tale opens during autumn, which is not bear fertility season. Omaha women were avoided by children at this time, because the smell of menstrual blood made them "sick in the chest," causing them to shrivel and become parched.[126] This is a clear suggestion of miscarriage, suggesting that there were culturally preferred times of conception and birth, in accord with Bear's mating season. The Bear couple's eating heartily before winter referred to harvest feasting in Eat-Alls, another female-led activity.[127] Moreover, it is from her Bear husband's reactions that Grizzly wife learns, first, that the hunters will try to kill him and, second, that it is Bear's intention that she help Little Brother in the kill.

Now, we see the story gradually masculinized from its original woman-focus to suggest that the Grizzly bride was frightened by Bear man and longed for her clan brothers to rescue her. Many of today's anthropologically "collected" versions of the bear-marriage stories emphasize the hunters as the bear-bride's deliverers.[128] This is necessarily a latter-day addition, for the point of bear-marriage tales is cyclical renewal, not the rescue of damsels in distress, a purely Western motif.[129] Moreover, significantly, the brothers are out hunting—*their sister*. Drifting back to a female focus, when the brothers bring Grizzly wife home, she does not immediately enter town but isolates. Another Indigenous rule is that anyone who has killed or taken part in causing death must sweat out their kill medicine before being around ordinary citizens. Grizzly woman isolated for this reason, because she had helped her brother kill her husband. Notably, there is no mention of the hunters likewise sweating out their kill (although it would have happened in a separate men's sweat).[130]

Grizzly woman did not shed her kill medicine, but used her time to amplify her bear nature, because she had carried, handled, kept, and finally donned her husband's bearskin. This bespoke an old prohibition against wearing a dead person's clothes, which were to be buried with the deceased.

Iroquoian creation tradition speaks directly to this prohibition by naming the one exemption from it: keeping the deceased's wampum of office, so it might be passed on in a requickening ceremony to the next person to hold the office once occupied by the deceased.[131] When Grizzly woman wore her little sister's clothing after the girl was dead, she again violated this rule, a feature of the account that explains why she died in the end.

In some bear-marriage traditions, Bear is directly resuscitated, following his self-sacrifice, but in this story, by turning into a Grizzly herself, the wife resuscitated his office as Bear. She multiply managed this. Not only did she create bear teeth for herself but also bear claws. Moreover, menstruation is said actively to turn women into bears, so that Bear wife literally became a bear when her flow began again in spring—the bear mating season.[132] This represents her turn from barren wife to hunter; that is, she is made man to take on a Breath task. Hunters typically wore bear-claw amulets.[133] Hair represents a person's being. Women comb out its meaning or, as here, put meaning into it. In using the little girl's (premenarch) hair to clean herself after her own flow, Bear wife was passing her woman tasks along to the girl.

Because the Bear wife turned into a Grizzly, her loyalty remained with the Grizzlies, so she sought vengeance against those who had murdered her husband, a very male twist to the story. Having resuscitated herself in an act of spirit potency, Grizzly killed her killers, including her little sister—but not the baby. Missing the significance of these facts, Westerners are apt to fixate on the brother-sister marriage. Because they take the sibling relationship at nuclear, face value, it twangs their pedophile-incest antennae. The traditionally significant part looks elsewhere, however. First, Grizzly Bear woman *resuscitated*. Second, she nursed the child, wearing her sister's clothes, thus taking over her sister's official position. The male telling suggests that the reason was to fool the brothers, but discarding the revisionist twists, let us recall that, as stories so far have shown, part of the bear story is proper childcare. The baby survived.

As it is originally told, the hunters are not the heroes of this tale but merely supporting cast. We should recall that the brothers wind up *hunting their sister*, against whom they are able to prevail at last only because they hold the seat of her Blood spirit, her heart. When they burn it (Breath) to a crisp, she dies in earnest. This portion of the story is a reference to cremation, a cleansing ritual against the return of either Blood or Breath spirits.[134] When Grizzly wife resuscitated, only to die again, she was alluding to the seasonal cycle shown annually by Ursa Major; that is, she is the protagonist

of the tale. How and why this story migrated from one of a woman-life focus to another of a male-hunting focus is a troubling aspect of the Bear marriage, not wholly supplied by Euro-ethnographers. I will examine it in subsequent chapters.

The Moral Code

As we have seen, Bear marriages often start with the Bear bride-to-be, out alone in the woods. This aspect is usually lost on Westerners, but it is an important one to traditionals, because Indigenous people do not go anywhere alone. There is no telling when a cougar will pounce, a tree will fall, a flash flood will rise, or any of a number of disasters requiring aid might befall one, so traditional people travel/ed in groups. This requirement was why Indigenous roads were always wide and straight, with high loaf mounds siding them in Mound Builder areas, acting like white road striping today. This allowed large groups to travel together without getting lost, while keeping an eye on the children, who were easily in view, should they start climbing the side loafs. These wide, straight roads are mentioned in many traditions across North America and are still visible, not the least because modern US highways such as I-77 were laid over them.[135]

Another common element revolves around the "meet cute" of bear and woman as they initially shame one another. Above, it was through berries, but I suspect that Western sanitization was at work in that "collected" tale. Indigenous people do not shy away from bodily functions, so most frequently, bear stories have the couple meeting when the bride-to-be steps in a steaming pile of fresh bear doo. In equally steaming disgust, she makes a squinty-eyed face and then loudly berates the author of the stinking mess now befouling her moccasins.

More is going on with this scene than just comedic nausea, although that is intended, too. It hooks into larger Indigenous commentaries on snobbery, elitism, selfishness, the proper treatment of offal, and respect for nature and the Other. The Inuit say that, wherever they may be, bears overhear any mockery, epithets, or disrespectful speech about them, and lie in wait for the speaker.[136] Indigenous Americans generally frown upon people holding themselves out as better than Others. The primary premise of egalitarian communities is that everyone provides his/her/their all to group advantage, so that no one is more important than anyone else; everyone's contribution is

equally valued, no matter how great or flawed.[137] This is the point of the important Iroquoian story of No-Face.[138]

Of the Three Sisters (corn, beans, and squash), Elder Sister Corn is the tallest and, hence, most obvious. Because corn is so essential to Indigenous life, Sister Corn began priding herself on being the most important and the most beautiful as well. Because no one is allowed to lord it over anyone else, no matter what s/he contributes, in thinking herself so grand as *all that*, Sister Corn annoyed the spirits of, well, everything else. They warned Sister Corn to mend her ways. However, like any narcissist, she ignored them, so after three warnings, they took away her beautiful face, requiring her to embark on a long quest to find it. On the journey, she met and grasped the beautiful indispensability of all her fellow spirits of earth and sky, until she became ashamed of her former self-importance. Once she realized that she was just one of many, all of whom had to blend with the rest to mean anything at all, the spirits restored her face. So that the people will remember forever the lesson of No-Face, to this day the Iroquois make *Ononyagayada*, the doll from corn husk, all beautifully dressed—but missing her face.

Thus, to despise another for any reason is itself despicable, hence the stories of offal children such as Manabush (also called Nanabush), who had his origin in the offal of his deceased younger twin. Manabush is a rabbit child, a trickster, here of the Menominee.[139] All offal children I know of, whether male or female, are tricksters with mean-spirited chips on their shoulders, from having been thrown away. Being discarded has given them long teeth and wild ways, giant traits intended to send a shiver down the spine of any hearer of their tale. Some of their cruelty derives from the cruelty of their own, improper disposal as worthless. There are right ways to dispose of offal, to prevent rabbit (long-toothed) children, and there are wrong ways, which will ensure rabbit children.[140] One point of such tales is the necessity of having mutual respect, even for those utterly unlike the self. They have feelings and rights.

Consequently, it is an act of disrespect for the woman of the Bear-bride tales to curse the bear's waste, no matter how smelly and disgusting it is to her. For their part, Bears claim that humans have a repulsive stench. In fact, a man's scent may well keep a bear's carcass from being scavenged by other animals when a hunter must leave it for a while.[141] In the bear-marriage tale told by "Mary," a Wolf Clan, Tagish woman, after the Bear wife and her cubs were retrieved by her brother, they could not stand to be around her human family. It would "take a long time" for them to acclimatize themselves to humans, she

told her cubs, because the "Indians stink like anything!"[142] Indeed, the Bear wife's discovery of humans as stinking piles of flesh is a consistent element of the Bear wife story.[143] Notice, though, that the goal is to overcome the revulsion not to wax self-righteous about own's own splendor.

It is common that irascible people who persist in believing themselves higher and better than the rest are apt, as my grandmother put it, to think that "theirs doesn't stink." This is not a compliment. As a result, unlike Westerners, who would hear of a woman cursing the bear upon stepping in his dung and think, "Darned right," an Indigenous listener would think, "Uh-oh." It is, after all, animal dung that makes the forest green and the grasslands grow. The dung-stepping woman should have looked where she was going. The point of the story, then, is that the Bear bride is not only as oblivious as a teenager with an iPhone but also disrespectful of nature and contemptuous of traditional civility. Like Sister Corn lost in a fog of elite conceit, she is ripe for a lesson in humility.

In the Nuxalk ("Bella Coola," Bilchula) story of the woman who married Black Bear, the young woman is out berrying, when she accidentally steps in Black Bear's dung. (See Fig. 1.5.) Emitting cries of disgust as she cleans her shoes, she chews out Black Bear for leaving his stinking pile in her path. Per the meet-cute script, she spies a handsome young man approach. He does not flirt, though, but accuses her. "You said that my dung smelled very badly," he charges. "Now let's see if yours is better than mine." He orders her to defecate.

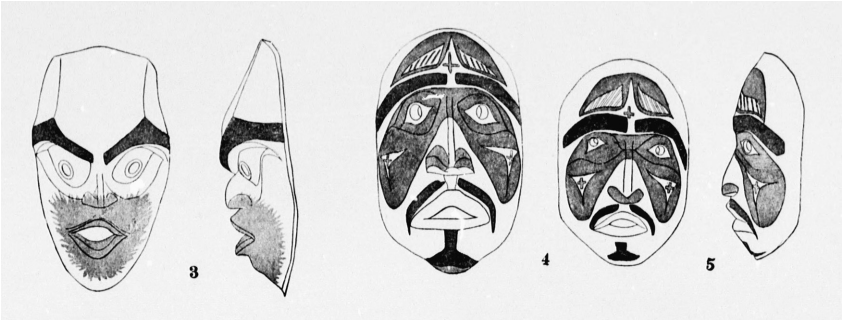

Figure 1.5 Nuxalk ("Bella Coola," Bilchula) cannibal dance masks, Illustration made ca. 1890. Giant cannibals are closely associated with bear marriage.

Source: Franz Boas, "Mythology of the Bella Coola Indians," in *Memoirs of the Museum of Natural History*, vol. 2, part 2 (August–November 1898): following text, Plate XII, Figs. 3–5, (p. 134, unnumbered). Images used courtesy of the Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

Embarrassed, the girl tries to fool him by dropping a few bangles from her copper bracelet and pretending that they constitute her dung, but he is not buying it. Instead, smacking the small of her back, he forces her to take a dump, right there, next to his pile, to compare their stenches.

"Your excrement smells worse than that of any animal," he cries in triumph, shaming her out loud.[144]

Although Westerners probably do not see it, the disrespect here belongs to the young lady, who is out alone—Violation 1—when she really steps in it. Cursing Bear is Violation 2. Bear does not let her off the hook because matriarchies do not engage in the soft sexism of overlooking women's violations because women are not as accountable as men for their actions. No one gets to play "helpless kitten."

The clumsy Nuxalk girl is next tested by Black Bear, to see whether she has repaired her disrespectful ways. Leading her to the home of the Black Bear chief, her Bear groom feeds her bad food to see whether she complains or stays. Still ashamed, she refrains from disparaging the food but stays without complaint. At that point, her Bear husband informs her that the goat meat he had given her was really human meat. She had eaten it, so her conversion into a bear had begun.[145] Testing even child adoptees for their courage or forbearance was a commonplace practice. For instance, when *Katepakomen* ("Simon Girty," 1741–1818) was considered for adoption at five years of age, the Wyandot-Seneca of Ohio tested his suitability for it by touching burning corkwood to the inside of his wrist to see how he bore pain. He passed the test by remaining stoic and was taken in.[146] Thus, Bear's feeding his bride man-meat was not an act of personal cruelty by Black Bear, but a test of her mettle.

Black Bear was not an unkind husband. When his bride brought in the wrong types of twigs for bear bedding, he fetched the right branches, himself, making their hibernation bed. As they lay down for the winter, he inquired about her family, learning that she had living parents, four brothers, and a little sister at home, with the youngest brother, the family hunter. Alarmed, Black Bear inquired minutely into how the hunter made his arrows, and the moment he understood that it was with loon feathers, Black Bear "dropped his head and began to cry," knowing that this brother, young as he was, would kill him.[147] (Traditionally, aquatic diving birds, including loons, herons, and grebes, do not get along with Bear. They are fishing rivals.)

Moreover, even as they spoke, Black Bear knew that his wife's little brother was watching them, so Bear instructed his wife to ensure that, once he was dead, he would be skinned whole, for she was to wear his skin as her

robe. With that, Bear was killed and skinned, his wife carrying his bearskin robe home with her. While brother and sister walked along, three times, the hunting dogs barked, and the brother heard three growls. The third time, he looked about to see a very large black bear coming behind him and realized that his sister had shape-shifted into a Black Bear. Still, he had not the heart to shoot her. Upon arriving at their town, she transformed back into a human.[148]

Although it was customary to wait four days before dressing a bearskin (to allow Bear's four spirits time to depart), the Bear wife immediately began to cure it, signaling that she was a bear incorporating his spirits. The brother hesitated to interfere, however, as he realized that she could shape-shift into a Bear at any moment. Once the hide was dressed, she sewed the skin into a full bear suit but claimed to break all the needles in the process, allowing her to send her little sister to fetch more. However, the little girl saw that she was merely affixing the sharp needles into her Bear mouth as teeth. Now, growling like a bear and donning the skin, the Bear bride first killed her mother and then went through the whole town, murdering everyone but the little sister, whom she spared, and her little brother, who was out of reach, hunting.[149]

Alone except for her little sister, who still fetched things for her, Black Bear bride sat now by the fire. Suddenly, she began to menstruate and mopped up the blood flow around her vulva using the hair of her little sister's head, thus passing her bear legacy along to the next generation (the little sister). To protect herself from her brother's loon-feathered arrows, she removed her lungs with her left hand, and her heart with her right hand. Without them, she could not die from a well-aimed arrow. Knowing she was safe, she hibernated before the fire for some months, while her brother returned to learn what had gone on from his little sister.[150]

Grabbing the girl, Brother dashed away as his Bear sister hibernated, traversing a log across a chasm with his little sister. Adjusting the log so that it would flip over should the Bear wife step on it, the hunter managed to forestall the advance of Black Bear sister by pushing her over the cliff. Arriving breathless in a new town, the brother-sister refugees appealed for help, knowing that Bear wife was not dead but still in hot pursuit. The townsfolk called in Loon and Grebe, the ferrymen, who left afloat in a canoe with barnacles and sea worms infesting its bottom, purportedly to ferry Bear wife across the water but really to sabotage her. The moment that she sat in the canoe, the barnacles and sea worms bit her in the behind. She jumped up, capsizing the boat. Loon and Grebe easily swam to shore, but Bear wife

drowned, leaving the brother, little sister, and townsfolk happily eating her bear meat. The clan brother and sister married.[151]

Removing both heart and lungs is an ancient part of this story, echoing Dwarf and Giant abilities. Safely storing the Blood heart and the Breath lungs ensured the resuscitation of bear. The Bear bride had removed her left-Blood heart with her Breath-right hand to keep it intact. Conversely, she removed the Breath-right lungs with her Blood-left hand for the same reason. Thus do Blood dwarfs remove and hang up their hearts so that while they are out, no one can kill them by shooting them through the heart. To protect their Breath, giant creatures like Coyote remove and suspend their lungs in Black Wind, Old Man of the east.[152] Any traditional would have realized that Brother did not have the Bear's heart and lungs in hand to do in his Bear sister with finality, but only someone well acquainted with the Old Things knows about these tactics. Ethnologists did not appreciate this, nor did at least partially Westernized Indigenes. Again, we see the original woman's point of the bear tale—respect, resuscitation, and continuation—interrupted by the valorization of male bear-killing.

Traditional listeners know that the presence of an intact skeleton invites resuscitation, which occurs prominently in a Cherokee version of the story. Here, it is a male hunter who marries the bear—after first trying to kill Bear. His efforts proved fruitless, because the Bear was a "medicine bear," who simply pulled the arrows out of his body, telling the man, "you can not kill me."[153] Instead, Bear invited the man to come with him. At first, the hunter feared that Bear would kill him, but being medicine, Bear knew his thoughts and calmed him. Bear then took the hunter to a Council of Animals, sending out runners to find chestnuts and acorns, occasioning a dance when the scouts were successful. During the dance, the animals noticed the man's smell and wished to serve him right for having hunted them, but Bear husband reminded them that he was a stranger and a guest. The dance done, Medicine Bear took his hunter husband to his house, making a feast by rubbing his stomach, causing good things to fall out into his paws.

Now, as the hunter lived with Medicine Bear, he began to grow long fur and "act like a bear." Because of his spirit potency, Medicine Bear could hear all that his husband's fellow human hunters said or thought, so he knew that hunters would come soon to kill him, to take his "clothes" (fur). He assured his husband that, instead of harming him, the hunters would take him back home with them. When this happened, Bear instructed his friend to cover his blood with leaves, adding that, if the hunter looked behind him after he

had "gone a piece," then he would "see something." To be sure, it all occurred as Medicine Bear predicted, and when the hunter looked back at the leaf pile, he saw Medicine Bear "rise up out of the leaves, shake himself, and go back into the woods."

At first, the husband's body hair was so furry that the hunters mistook the man for another bear, but upon discovering that he was human, they took him home, as predicted. There, the bear consort immediately entered a sweat lodge for seven days (seven being the Cherokee sacred number), thus to lose his bear nature and put back on his human nature. However, on the fifth day, his human wife discovered that he was still alive, forced her way into the sweat, and dragged him home, where he soon died because "he still had a bear's nature."[154]

Regardless of the version of Bear marriage, the Indigenous nation keeping it, or the sex of the bear or its mate, we see all the motifs of life, fertility, provisioning, birth, death, and resuscitation, all in cyclical motion, with the ultimate point being the ever-renewing cycle of the seasons. Although Western ethnologists have Euro-formed the story to make the hunters the heroes of the tale, the clan brothers are at best functionaries. At worst, they are villains, reshaping the original story into one of cruelty by forcing shape-shifting on their recovered sibling, first, by killing the Bear and, second, by making the widow/er carry and then wear the Bear's skin—or even eat the bear's meat. Sometimes, they transgress further by not allowing the consort to sweat off the bear's death. Throughout, Bear models honor, respect, self-sacrifice, kindness, renewal, and spiritual potency.

2

A New and Frightening Reality

Analysis of Tradition

by Barbara Alice Mann

The largest fact that comes screaming out of the bear cave is the deep antiquity of the Woman Who Married the Bear. Much of the recent shouting emanates from the scientific community concerning whether—or not—a comet hit the earth in multiple impacts stretching roughly 12,900 years ago, starting the Younger Dryas, a mini-ice age, till about 11,700 years ago, when it is generally agreed that the Younger Dryas wound down.[1] There is evidence that, not only did the megafauna die off in situ during this period, but also the human populations in North America took a huge hit, significantly declining at the same time.[2] Moreover, new DNA evidence shows that both Denisovan and Neanderthal heritage exist in various proportions in Native American populations.[3] In this period, bears become confounded with humans, Giants conflate with bears, and Bear marriage takes on new meanings, as do murder, hunting, and cannibalism. Nothing makes sense; everything is in uproar, and comprehension of the situation could not have been much better in 12,900 Before Present (BP).

The Bölling–Allerød Giants

Immediately preceding the Younger Dryas, the Bölling–Allerød warming in North America had begun, seriously melting glaciers by 15,000 BP, with parts of South America becoming almost balmy.[4] Indigenous American traditions speak of that climate and of the flooding in this beforetime. For instance, the Ho-Chunk have a story of an ancient "Deluge," not only from heavy rain but also from a "strong wind blowing the waters of the great lakes [*sic*], and overflowing the land."[5] Cheyenne land at this time was a "pleasant country," free of "ice and snow and bitter cold" even though it was in the north.

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Coming together in organized hubs for the busy activity of tool-making, the Cheyenne traveled south, but after multiple, recurring floods destroyed their southern lives, they returned to their once-pleasant land of the north.[6] This suggests large and sophisticated cultures for paleological times and is consistent with modern evidence of the Clovis people.

In addition to climate warming, Indigenous Americans also retain numerous tales of the megafauna.[7] The Iroquois said that these "great beasts which were harming the human race" first lived "to the far west."[8] Then, the ice-clad man, *O'ha'a'*, Flint of the Mohawk, made an ice bridge spanning the water between Turtle Island (North America) and Asia, the place where "great animals of fierce dispositions" dwelled, because Flint wanted them to "habitually come over" to North America across the "lake" (ocean).[9] The Cherokee likewise recall when people encountered these "huge animals," as opposed to the "ones we typically see nowadays."[10] They too said that this happened "a long time ago," when the people walked up north from the south, only to see the megafauna and even manage to take a few for food.[11]

Western Native Americans likewise kept these traditions. The Dakota of 1847 used pieces of megafauna bones as "medicine."[12] The "Sioux people" had a constellation or asterism which they called the "Hairy Elephant" (mammoth), a likely reference to Taurus, anciently visible from around 19,700 BCE.[13] In 1787, Thomas Jefferson recorded a speech by a Lenape delegation to Virginia whose members, when asked about mammoth bones, told of the coming of a herd of the "tremendous" creatures, who killed competing animals trying to use the same salt lick on the Ohio River.[14] In 1872, a European youth plowing in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, turned up an etched stone showing one of these hairy elephants near human figures. The young man carelessly tossed the etching into a trunk with other artifacts that his plow had turned up. In 1882, it was passed along to a local historical society, which preserved it. This stone etching belonged to the old Lenape.[15]

Some of these huge animals ate humans, terrifying the people, who certainly did not consider them prey, except in the most urgent circumstances. Indeed, the emphasis of the earliest times was on plant-based diets, so that the Western skew of "Man, the Great Hunter," and all else as his quivering prey sounds downright ridiculous. Such imagery may articulate a fantasy of nineteenth-century Europeans, but it is unlikely to describe real Clovis hunting. At best, bringing down even a single large animal using Clovis points would have been arduous and uncertain, as modern studies show.[16] Thus, the former "overkill hypothesis" so popular in Western archaeological

circles in the 1980s and 1990s, claiming that Indigenous overhunting had been responsible for the megafaunal extinction, was irresponsible at best and racist at worst.[17] Although scientifically refuted today, its adolescent imagery of spear-chucking Indians accosting mammoths still dominates the internet.[18] Indigenous Americans continue to await an apology.

The Younger Dryas: The Thousand-Year Winter

In fact, the megafauna died because the Bölling–Allerød warming suddenly collapsed into the Younger Dryas. Why the world refroze was long a mystery. Then, in 2007, Richard Firestone and his colleagues proposed that a comet had occasioned the catastrophic onset of the Younger Dryas, reversing the warming trend. Their evidence consisted of a carbon-rich earth layer that lay above the subsequently vanishing Clovis points, piles of Pleistocene animal bones, and additional bits of evidence. These consisted of magnetic microspherules including melt-glass, nano-diamonds, and iridium requiring higher temperatures than volcanoes could produce; magnetic grains; and platinum in large amounts.[19] Following the 2007 article, a discussion, shall we call it, rocked the scientific community around whether a comet strike had actually occurred, occurred in the way that Firestone et al. proposed, or occurred only in the addled brains of Firestone et al. By 2021, however, the Firestone hypothesis had mostly prevailed. The current theory has the comet and its fragments hitting North America and Greenland, with its "swarm of comet debris" probably originating from the "Taurid meteor stream."[20]

A major piece of evidence offered by Firestone and company for the Younger Dryas shift was the sudden disappearance of Clovis points, an identifiable form of early spear point found in North America. Clovis points showed up circa 13,050 BP but vanished abruptly in 12,900 BP, just as the comet arrived. Although the exact dating of later spear points is debated, there is no question that after a significant time gap of about a thousand years, Clovis points were replaced by Folsom, Rainey, Barnes, Cumberland, and Redstone points.[21] Importantly, unlike Clovis points, the subsequent spear points are scarce, suggesting a greatly diminished population using them. Indeed, human population is known to have dropped significantly in this period.[22] Likewise, following 12,900 BP, animal and plant life dropped by about 50 percent in North America.[23] Airburst meteors such as that in Tunguska, Krasnoyarsky Krai, Russia, in 1908—or like the larger burst of 12,900

BP—will set off massive wildfires. Consequently, it is unsurprising that a definitive study showed 9 percent of the earth's biomass had been consumed as a result of the explosion, setting off a "nuclear winter" effect.[24] About a thousand years later, human populations began to rise again on Turtle Island.[25] It is obvious that something very drastic and dangerous transpired between 12,900 and 11,700 BP.

Like science, tradition also describes two separate and profound ecological events, the first removed from the second by "many hundreds of years."[26] This sounds very much like a description of the environmental effects of the Bölling–Allerød yielding to a meteor swarm bringing the earth changes of 12,900 BP followed by the rewarming of 11,700 BP. During the interim, time collapsed, leaving puny hominids befuddled as to their core identity.[27] In desperate survival mode after the first calamity, survivors sought refuge, largely underground. In the Yucatan Peninsula, skeletons of humans living in a clear, pre-ceramic population dating to 13,000 BP were found in caves along with megafaunal remains, as later submerged.[28] North America proper harbors ancient traditions of cave- and tunnel-dwelling during a surface catastrophe, followed by tales of rewarming.[29]

If a pleasant climate and flooding were consistent with the Bölling–Allerød warming, then fire followed by ice comports with the wildfires and nuclear winter that accompanied the airburst meteor strikes from the Firestone event.[30] Thus, it is interesting that when the Cheyenne returned north after their southern tool-making sojourn, it was only to find the land barren and dead, without trees, animals, or fish. The people "cried aloud"; the "women and children wept." People were now forced to go about "in small bands," as they had at the very "beginning," before they had coalesced into population centers. When that first winter arrived, it came with its own cold floods, the existential crisis forcing the people to dress in furs and retreat to caves. After "many hundreds of years" following this disaster, just as winter was setting in, "the earth shook and the high hills sent forth fire and smoke."[31]

A Chinook tradition likewise describes the Younger Dryas shift. First, a winter came that was "colder and harder than any before." As high as half a man, the snow did not melt in the spring. Instead, the snow just continued. Ice careened down the rivers, "grinding and crashing." The winter simply would not end, so the people knew that something had gone terribly wrong: "The earth was frozen."[32] The Iroquois trickster *O'ha'a'*, who brought on the cold, was nicknamed Flint because, in Iroquoian languages, the word for ice and

the word for chert (flint) are interchangeable, with ice often conflated with chert, which closely resembles chunks of dirty ice.[33]

The Pawnee have a tradition about the "big people" dying in the endless rain and flooding of the impact. (Indigenous tradition calls things of all categories, including stars, insects, rocks, etc., "people," so that these "big people" meant the megafauna.) Their bodies turned into "roots," which could later be dug up by the "small people" (little animals) who replaced the big ones. However, humans were advised not to dig up these "roots," as they stank with an "odor" that was "something like that from a person's armpits." The massive rain, said the Pawnee, was caused by the "Big Black Meteoric Star," which required a "smoke offering."[34] The later stinky roots might have come from tar pits, whose hydrogen sulfide has a stench reminiscent of thioalcohols, the culprit in armpit odor. Tar pits might have been used to make the smoke offerings, too, for precontact Indigenes used the La Brea Tar Pits as a fuel source, while in Pennsylvania, they dug actual oil wells.[35]

The Quillayute of western Washington State also have a story in which the cold came on suddenly but lingered, shedding hailstones "so large" that "many people were killed" by them. Everyone was driven from the coastline to the prairie, where conditions continued so bad that the people "grew weak and thin from hunger," till they ate buffalo grass and the babies died, along with the little children. Finally, a Thunderbird (a comet or a fragment) coming from the west threw a "giant whale" down on the prairie to them, making a "deep, whirring sound" as it passed. Thus, they credited the Thunderbird with feeding them.[36] A Nakota (Assiniboine, Ojibwe) allegory features a woman being led north by a mysterious man traveling to an unfriendly, freezing place, where cruel men rip all four sets of her clothing from her and throw her out naked into the snow to die.[37] She was Mother Earth, stripped of her four seasons by a meteor, followed by the "swarm of comet debris," leaving her barren and cold.[38]

There is clearly, then, a beforetime and an aftertime in tradition. In 1865, Klamath Chief Lalek recounted an eruption of Mount Shasta that went back so long ago, it happened "*before the stars fell*."[39] Clearly, the stars' falling existed as the point of demarcation between the two periods: the pleasant time before and the desperate time after. Wildfire traditions around this event generally involve "stars" falling from the sky, that is, air-burst meteors, indicating the Firestone swarm. The Pawnee had a prophecy that, although the stars would fall, it was "not time for the world to end." Instead, a turtle-shaped meteor of many colors would fall, causing "other meteors to light

up and fly through the sky." Sure enough, "the stars flew around like birds," and some "people began to mourn," believing that the "world was at an end," but others recalled the old promise of survival.[40] When the stars fell, say the Lenape, "Great Man above," meaning something celestial, "seized his lightning" and "descended on the earth" to sit atop a mountain, from whence he "hurled his bolts" at the mammoths, killing them all. The sky man's footprints were "still to be seen" on the scarred mountains, they added.[41]

The Cherokee speak of the transition, when the seventh star fell. First, there were no stars (meteors) in the night sky, just one large orb, and the people listened to the sky's *prodigieusement grand* ("prodigiously huge") Great Horned Rabbit, whose "dwelling place" was "toward the rising of the sun," possibly Venus, Lepus, or even the morning moon.[42] (There is an old interpretation of moon markings as depicting an enormous hare.)[43] This Hare originally told the people to watch for a Great Star till it was overhead, after which seven stars would appear in the spring. During this pleasant time, the seven stars signaled a period of celebration, a "great feast, with dances and all kinds of food."[44] Before the stars fell, then, the seven stars and the feasting suggested that it was a nonthreatening, annual event, most probably, an agricultural time-marker. It sounds as though people turned out annually to witness a harmless light show, but one horrible year, it transmuted into a disorienting disaster.

The seven stars might have been the Pleiades, but the Corona Borealis also appears in the spring from 90° to 50° north and is known to Indigenous American tradition.[45] These stars, however, do not fall. Consistent with tumbling stars are the regular meteor showers visible in the Northern Hemisphere, such as the Lyrids, which peak April 21–22, annually, quickening at dawn, near a very bright Vega.[46] The Taurid meteor shower is another annual event visible in North America, coming in the late fall, mid-October through mid-November. Again, Taurid debris is tentatively fingered as the culprit in the 12,900 BP meteor swarm.[47]

The Cherokee story describes a frightening *Atsil-Tluntutsi*, the Cherokee "Fire-Panther" (meteor). The seven boys involved died, becoming stars.[48] (Breath spirits walk along the Milky Way Trail upon death.)[49] The calamitous starfall, necessarily witnessed by more than the Cherokee, might even be why, across Indigenous America to this day, meteors are warily viewed as perilous intruders. The Iroquois call starfall Meteor Man, *Gaasiondietha*, the Fire Beast, or *Oshondowek'gona*, the White Panther, the Fire Dragon of Discord, He Whose Body Was White.[50] For the Shawnee, he is *Tecumthé*, the

Crouching Sky Panther, the Shooting Star, the I-Cross-the-Way Man.[51] The Makah of Washington State regard comets as "Lightning Fish" associated with Thunderbird, a meteor. Lightning Fish's head is "as sharp as a knife," and his "red tongue . . . makes fire." Whenever Lightning Fish hits dry ground, the Makah seek out pieces of its "bone," which is "bright red." This Lightning Fish tongue could and did kill whales, as did the Quillayute Thunderbird.[52]

An 1883 Papago tale of pre-ice life and the coming of the ice attributes the disaster to hubris. Originally, the Great Mystery set earth life in motion by sending down Montezuma, a wise leader, and Coyote, his deputy. The Bölling–Allerød world of that time was pleasant, warm, and abundant, until Montezuma's estimate of himself led him into autocracy. He began building a sky tower (probably meaning a pyramid), declaring himself beyond the reach of morality and law. His pretensions thrust the world into war, as his sky house pushed higher and higher. At that point, the Great Mystery pushed the sun farther from the earth, so that the air turned frigid. The earth "trembled," as snow and ice took over. Now the people in their bloodlust could no longer talk to animals; in fact, disparate humans could no longer communicate.[53] Despite the obvious Christian overlay, what comes through in this story is an ecological disaster that turned a once-pleasant world of some cultural development to hunting, strife, isolation, ice, and snow.

The Tusayan Pueblo people of the Grand Canyon claim to have lived through the aftermath underground, suffering from the damp "at the lowest depths." They grew tired of their "misery," so the spirit of Earth nudged the Feathered Serpent to release cane seed to them. When planted, the seed grew into a crevice, wedging it open to the sky. From thence forward all the people still dressed in their snakeskins were now "permitted to come to the surface." They settled above ground.[54] Pawnee stories offer details of the diet underground. The people kept herds of bison in hollowed-out caverns.[55] Turkey and buffalo are symbiotic animals, which Indigenous Americans typically kept together. Thus, mentions of birds in connection with buffalo and caves are not too unusual, as in the Pawnee tradition of Without Wings, on the powers of Birds, Buffalo, and corn grain.[56]

Apparently, not everyone lived underground during the climate hiatus. The Wyandot recall the great snows increasing, in that northern place, there, where they lived. Sometimes, the snow fell so thickly overnight that they had to dig up just to exit their homes in the morning. Leaving for a land that they had heard lay in the south, these above-ground people determinedly dug their way through the deep snow as they traveled on—and on, again.[57]

An additional story from the other side of starvation involves the Jicarilla Apache. Above ground, they suffered through a time of terrible famine, while the tricky Raven kept the buffalo penned underground, taking one now and then for meat, while leaving the above-ground people to starve. To save his people, a man shape-shifted into a dog to sneak past Raven and release the buffalo; they almost all ran out onto the prairie before Raven noticed. Furious, Raven attempted to kill the dog-man but could not find him. "Long ago they were hungry," the tradition ends, "but he let the buffalo out and then they had plenty to eat."[58] To me, this sounds as if one clan retreated but refused accommodations to their other half (their cousined phratry), so one man sneaked in, dressed in dogskin, to release the buffalo. Traditionally, hoarders are always in the wrong.[59]

There are also traditions of the climate rewarming. The Mohawk *O'ha'a'*, Flint, is shown fiddling around with the animals, fashioning, botching, patching them up, and making a real mess of creation, as was his wont. A bird he was making came out a bat.[60] Frustrated, he drove all the animals into a "rock cavern" in a "high mountain," sealing up the entrance with a stone. A thaw began when a Bluebird flew near *Tawiskaron*, startling him so that his ice bridge melted even as he scurried across it, just one running step ahead of the melt.[61] Bluebirds traditionally indicate astronomical events, here, most probably, a second comet strike, given blue's death associations.[62]

If the Iroquoian trickster had brought on underground living, the Sinkiuse's trickster, Coyote, did in the "Ice People," ending the cold.[63] For the Modoc of the 1850s, it was the "Sky Spirit," perhaps part of the warming after 11,700, who began to melt the cold by walking down Mount Shasta, reaching down as he went along to touch the earth. Everywhere his finger tapped, a sapling sprouted, while his footprints turned the snow to slush, so that "water ran down in rivers." Some glacial snow persisted, nonetheless, being the "mountains of snow and ice," glaciers out of which he made his "lodge."[64] The Kiowa recall the moment of release of the underground buffalo. One day, the great Kiowa leader, Sinti, freed them, sending them rushing across the prairies in all directions.[65]

On April 5, 1852, a Diné (Navajo) guide and interpreter for the US Army, "Old Santiago," relayed his people's emergence from underground living. Long ago, "the Navajoes, Pueblos, Coyoteras, and the Americans all lived underground" beneath a Mount Santiago (possibly Navajo Mountain). Insects and animals breeched the covering of the cave, opening up a hole, through which the people emerged. Once out, the Diné and the Pueblo stayed put

in the area, but the "Americans" headed east, not to be heard from again—"until within a few years past." While underground, everyone shared a language, but once up, the languages meandered. The "domestic animals" that the people had kept underground lingered with humans, but the feral animals skedaddled. The people now enlarged the earth.[66] On the one hand, this is a standard story of Blood spirit emergence, but on the other hand, there are elements that coincide with all the tunnel-living tracts: people couped up because the above space was unlivable, domestic animals kept down in the tunnels for food, an opening to the surface, and eventual release onto a surface that could once again sustain life.

The Hunting Way

In the beforetime, a goodly number of Indigenous Americans did not eat meat, so we have stories such as that of the Cahto of the northern California coast. In the first world, when the spirits originally created a Cahto man, they "put grass inside him to form his stomach."[67] The Arapaho say that the Turtle-Moccasined One calmed the floodwaters and then created corn from the bullrushes.[68] Thus, they farmed corn as their first food, but when the horrific cold came on, their corn turned to stone.[69] Freezing cold will appear to turn biomatter to "stone." For its part, Cheyenne tradition specifically recalls that humans "lived on honey and wild fruits, and were never hungry." Consequently, they "wandered everywhere among the animals," sleeping undisturbed on the "cool grass" every night. When they awoke, "they talked with the other animals, for they were all friends, and one people."[70]

This life died in the snow. Evidence demonstrates that a shift in the food supply and food chain can bring on disastrous moral confusion.[71] When life turned tough in the Younger Dryas, although the venerable ways were no longer possible, their scruples remained. Consequently, stories of changes in sustenance show great moral stress, with tradition presenting the onset of hunting as other than a joyous or welcomed development. The Pawnee retain a bittersweet tradition of the Corn Bundle Woman crying and pleading with the people not to forget her. A young man hears her weeping, dreams that she beckons him, and heads out in the night to find her. She tells him that "when the people passed over this place while hunting buffalo they dropped me. I have been crying ever since, for you know that the people do not let a kernel drop from an ear of corn." Nevertheless, a speckled corn kernel lay on the

ground at his feet. As he picked it up, the woman told him that her inception spirit, the Mother-Evening-Star, had put milk into corn kernels, so that the people might "eat of us and have life," even as suckling children depend on their mothers for life. The corn tassels of the field sing in the wind, and that was the sound of the "sacred corn" forever.[72]

Sacred it might have been, but ice of the "white mountains that moved" crashed all around.[73] At this point of desperation, the Arapaho received new instructions from *Hechaba Nihancan* ("Spider Above," the "Clever One"). Traditionally viewed as a tricky spirit, *Hechaba Nihancan* told the people to clothe themselves against the cold in bear, panther, and deer skins by hunting animals using knapped flint points.[74] The Cheyenne also present hunting as starting with a set of new instructions from another Breath spirit, *Maheo*.[75]

This was around the time that the Arapaho man *Waxuuhuunen* was banished along with his wife for having committed a "murder." When *Waxuuhuunen* cried, he was comforted by *Hechaba Nihancan*, who instructed him to dry the meat of his kill into pemmican (jerky). Thereafter, *Waxuuhuunen* attempted to hunt a buffalo cow, but as Mother of the Buffalo, the cow persuaded him to wait for the rest to come by, because killing her would harm all buffalo. Using a ceremony invented by his wife, *Waxuuhuunen* lured the buffalo herd into approaching his lodge and then shot several of the buffalo grazing about. His wife skinned the dead buffalo. Next, *Nihancan* instructed *Waxuuhuunen* to pile all the meat into one of the skins to take the pemmican to the lodges of those who had banished him. Arriving, *Waxuuhuunen* ate first, and then the people of each lodge ate after him. A sweat lodge was set up on the fourth day. Once every lodge had been given its proper instructions for dress and deportment, all but the buffalo lodge and the offerings lodge pledged men to its ceremonies. At this point, conversing with the animals became a difficult task, reserved to the spiritually gifted.[76]

Importantly, we learn that this story is set right after a serious, four-wave flood, in a time when Buffalo Woman could still communicate with *Waxuuhuunen*, an ability that was to disappear with the vegetarian ethos. Between them, these details suggest that *Waxuuhuunen*'s "murder" was of an animal, probably a buffalo, for food. After all, *Waxuuhuunen* was instructed in hunting rules (no breeding females are to be taken), in making clothes and bags of skins, and in preserving meat. *Waxuuhuunen*'s unnamed wife learned how to keep the animals calm and approachable. She also learned how to skin them. Their food sharing was crucial to group survival. When

the couple took the food to the lodges of their people, *Waxuuhuunen* ate first in what sounds like a demonstration or a ritual, with hungry people following his lead. The feast was followed by a sweat. Sweat lodges rebalance the cosmos when it is set awry—say, by Preferring buffalo hunting over grain farming. To this day, sweating purifies the sweaters after they have killed something or someone.[77] None of this activity was later remarkable, so that the only reason a tradition about it would exist was because it marked the onset of an important alteration in the way things were done.

All nations I know of incorporated strict rules requiring the animal people's permission to hunt them along with a clear explanation to the prey regarding how all their body parts were to be used. Disregarding the rules called disaster down on the hunters and their clans. Hunting societies like the Little Water Society of the Iroquois and the Little Deer Society of the Cherokee held that the animals cast untoward medicine when they were disrespected.[78] The Cherokee recount that, at the inception of hunting, the animals held a council to lay down stringent rules for it. Any flippant hunter would wind up with rheumatism.[79] By the same token, Tlingit tradition holds that particularly male hunters had to be very careful with any grizzly bear they killed, lest the bear's friends in turn hunt down and kill them.[80] Typically, a clan does not kill its own totem animal, although sometimes, if Bear Clan kin carefully apologize to any bear they hunt, then they are allowed to eat specific portions of it.[81]

Enter the Cannibals.

The Stone Coats

Traditions of this hunting time also begin talking about cannibalism, as associated with bears and Stone Giants, or tall hominins. ("Stone" can refer to glacial ice or chert.) Coming across Flint's ice bridge with their fellow megafauna were the short-faced bears (*Arctodus simus*) of the North American Pleistocene. Short-faced bears lived, or at least urinated and defecated, in caves.[82] Standing on their hind legs, they hit eleven or twelve feet in height.[83] Tradition regularly described them as nearly hairless. The Iunit bear spirit is represented as a "huge animal without any hair except on the points of the ears and of the tail and at the mouth."[84] Lenape stories also described the short-faced bear as lightly furred, almost naked, hence his nickname, "Naked Bear." Formally, the Lenape called him Yagesho or Tagisho and recalled him

as being far more destructive than even the dreaded mammoths.[85] Yagesho was known for his powerful shoulders and arms, dwindling to hind legs shorter and thicker than his front legs.[86] Like hominid Stone Giants, short-faced bears ate women and children seized while out berrying (no doubt, easier prey than armed men). If a Yagesho was encountered, one's only hope was that a body of water was nearby, for it would not follow its prey into the water. Yagesho even ate "the largest bear." In community defense, the men would form sizable parties to seek out and destroy the Yagesho nearby.[87] It must have been harrowing work.

Then, the stars fell, and bears transitioned from the fearsome short-faced variety to the colored bears: Green Bear, White Bear, Blue Bear, Black Bear, and Red Bear. Indigenous American cultures typically connect colors with directions, clans, and abilities. Colors are frequently coded with the directions, although the color symbolism changes, depending on the group doing the coding. Originally, anyhow, there were two directional sets, one honoring the Four Mothers, Blood earth, and the other the Four Winds, Breath sky.

Black Elk's Oglala Sioux story of the White Buffalo Calf Woman gifting the people with their sacred pipe shows her rolling around on the ground, as buffalo are wont to do, but she is changing colors to match which direction she faces during her ritual. Moving in a "sun-wise" (Breath) manner during the ritual in which she handed over the pipe (a Breath item), White Buffalo Calf Woman first turned red and brown, next white, and finally black before "bowing to each of the four quarters of the universe" and vanishing over a hill.[88] My guess is that this was originally two sets of directions: the first honors touching the earth, and the second, recognizing the "universe," or sky. Similarly, a Diné (Navajo) story has the seasonal Changing Woman going through "white shell, turquoise, abalone shell, and jet black."[89] The abalone color at hand was probably yellow, for Diné directions typically accord with white in the east, turquoise in the south, yellow in the west, and black in the north.[90]

Whether these associations fit with culture in 12,900 BP is unknown, but old traditions all name leadership by colors, with the Meskwaki Green Bear of tradition certainly behaving like a Stone Giant in attacking sleeping towns, disrespecting the dead, and indiscriminately killing animals and people.[91] Today among the Sauk and Meskwaki, green is associated with Breath, which leads me to suspect that, when the stars fell, green was the color of the south, where things still grew green, but that may be a modern sensibility.

If originally, Green Bear was an antique ritual designation, today, it is the Meskwaki "Old Bear" who wears green.[92] When the Smithsonian got around to investigating Green Bear in 1938, the designation had become shamanistic, with Green Bear a "blessed" or holy person, instructing the people in a rather brutal hunting and war ritual.[93]

The Ho-Chunk say that White Bear was the last "person" to arrive on Turtle Island and was, therefore, the youngest. The last one into any territory is always the "younger" sibling, who must listen to the "elder" siblings, that is, the first versus the last to have arrived.[94] Thus, the traditional name for Europeans in the Americas was "Younger Sibling," as Europeans were the dead last to come.[95] White Bears are polar bears, who would have stayed north, so this leaves me wondering about the order of ursine and/or Giant arrival in North America. Traditionally, White Bear was assigned to earth because he was so "patient and strong-minded."[96] This was why the Cherokees depicted White Bear as the chief of the earth bears.[97] White is often connected with white wampum beads, the color of agéd things, of smooth (harmless) things. The Sauk connect it with white flowers, which tend to show that something, say the water lily bulb or the potato, is edible.[98]

Black Bear was considered the eldest, which probably means the first arrived, or at least, the first noticed. The Osage say that his "body symbolized long life and old age; his claws were the symbols of courage and fire, the fire that knows no mercy."[99] Mercilessness was a Giant trait, yet age is a revered Breath trait associated with ethical wisdom. Black Bear is "Litter," the Great Bear of Ursa Major who keeps the ceremonial four black (flint) knives with a red (probably obsidian) handle.[100] In Pawnee tradition, Black Bear came up from the south, "where the plums stay upon the trees nearly all winter."[101] Coming up from the south suggests that he was already in the Americas when the stars fell.

In a Ho-Chunk story, Blue Bear originally "came walking on the ocean," but the moment he hit land, "he flew off as a raven and alit on the shore," no doubt why only the Raven clan tells the Blue Bear story.[102] Both of these traits are Breath, which cannot drown but can fly, while it is not hard to imagine that Arctic bears did cross water on ice floes in 12,900 BP. Not incidentally, although long pooh-poohed by ethnographers, traditionalists had always maintained that Blue Bears were real, not imaginary. In 1918, Smithsonian scientists ate their dismissive words when they seized a Blue Bear, alive and kicking, in Alaska.[103] Anyone who has seen a calving glacier knows that it glows blue just prior to collapsing, so that it is pretty dangerous to be below

one that is blue. Perhaps this is one reason that blue is associated with the Breath death that some nations place in the blue-sky north.[104] Today, blue is connected with "blue" (dark purple) wampum beads, which tend to contain wrinkled (potentially harmful) properties.

Red Bear might have referred to brownish bears, but the stories of them come from the far north, so this does not seem likely. In one tale from the Yukon, near St Michael and Norton Sound, a woman turned into a ferocious Red Bear.[105] Originally, Takúka was no bear, but a loving wife and mother. Her husband Pitikh′cholik′ was a good hunter of reindeer and seals, but on one seal hunt, he remained away for a frighteningly long time. When he returned, he was "gloomy and sad," explaining to Takúka that he felt he was going to die soon. In preparation, he gave Takúka detailed instructions about handling his death journey and, especially, its food offerings. Pitikh′cholik′ then died on the third day from his arrival. Although devastated, Takúka put out, for the ghost, food as he had asked. For the first three mornings, she saw that his "shade" had eaten his death food, but on the fourth day, he, the food, and his kayak were gone. This left Takúka working very hard to find berries and to dry fish to feed herself and her children.

One day, Takúka journeyed farther than usual in search of berries, so far, in fact, that she saw smoke rising from an unknown camp. Happy that new people who might help her were about, she went down to their houses along the shoreline to meet them. After the first woman came out to greet her (i.e., discover her business there), two others emerged to greet her. They all wore "handsome fur garments," surely warm for the winter. Then Takúka heard a song she recognized—and then the singer! It was her husband, Pitikh′cholik′.

It suddenly dawned on Takúka what had been going on. She was furious, a "strange, fierce anger" swelling "in her heart," which only grew as laughter in the house wended its way to her ears, late into the night. When Pitikh′cholik′ left the next morning, Takúka went down to the house, where one of the women within admired the beauty of her facial tattoos. Takúka offered to give her facial lines, too, albeit warning that the process would hurt. The woman did not mind pain, however, so long as she became as beautiful as Takúka, who accordingly told her to start boiling oil in preparation. When the oil was bubbling, Takúka grabbed the woman by the hair and shoved her head into the oil, holding it under, till she was dead. Drawing her out of the oil, Takúka said, "There, you will always be beautiful now."

Meanwhile, the other two women in the house had decided that they, too, wanted facials, so Takúka boiled their faces, too, assuring them that they

would be "pretty," as well, when she was done. Next, out on the beach, Takúka propped up stands made of sticks and dressed them in the women's clothing, so that from a distance, they looked like the women, as if they were ready to greet Pitikh′cholik′ as he arrived. Then, taking one of the beautiful red bearskins the women had, she hid in nearby rocks to await her unfaithful husband's return.

Sure enough, as he approached the shore, Pitikh′cholik′ thought the scarecrows were his new wives, so he sang out his arrival song, growing annoyed when they did not answer him. As he pulled to shore, he saw that the figures were mere effigies. Hurrying then to the houses, he found their corpses and began to cry, threatening to tear out the heart of whoever had killed them. In reply, Takúka growled her best Red Bear growl and took two flat stones from her hiding place. One, she put over her chest, and the other, over her back, wrapping both in her red bearskin to protect herself from his arrows and spears.

Seeing Takúka now, but believing that she really was a Red Bear, Pitikh′cholik′ began shooting off his arrows while calling Red Bear every bad thing he could think of. Because Takúka had armored herself, however, his arrows fell harmlessly to the ground. She rushed him. He made a mighty lunge with his spear, but it "broke in his hands." Feeling her fury rise, Takúka threw him on the ground, tore out his heart, and ate it on the spot. As her anger abated, she attempted to remove the Red Bear robe but found that it would not come off.

Now Takúka thought of her home and her children. Knowing that they would be hungry, she hurried back. In thinking of her children, however, she felt a strange blood lust well up in her again. Rushing into her house, she set upon her sleeping children, tearing them apart. "After this," the story closes, Takúka "went out and wandered over the earth, filled with a desire to destroy every one she came across."

Takúka's story is pretty much the tale of a human woman becoming a Stone Giant. The first ingredient is fury, not only at having been left behind to die, but also at the abandonment's happening by cruel ruse. Much the same resentment of being left to starve existed in the Jicarilla Apache tale of Dog Man releasing Raven's buffalo. There, it, it motivated self-help. Here, however, crazed revenge became the only motive. As always, a woman's putting on a bear suit began her transformation, because once it was on, it was nearly impossible to remove. Ethnographers always present this transformation as a mystical event, but I am not so sure. A century ago, Euro-Americans used

to sew themselves into thick long-johns for the whole winter, so that taking them off in the spring (pee-yew!) must have been challenging.[106]

This leads me to wonder whether there might have been more to putting on the bear suit than just slipping on a coat. For instance, the "bears" in the Cherokee story of White Bear's war council could not learn to shoot using the bow and arrows unless they first removed their bear-suit claws, which kept catching on the bowstring. Mastering the new armament would thus have required the permanent sacrifice of their claws, a weapon they were used to, for the bow and arrow, a weapon they were not used to. White Bear decreed the result too uncertain to be beneficial, so they kept the claws and discarded the bow and arrow.[107] This begins to make the bear suit look like a fairly complex and permanent costume with greater implications than have been generally allowed, especially when we recall that women turning into bears regularly manufactured "teeth" and "claws" for themselves, as shown in the last chapter.

Also invisible to ethnology yet fairly important to the story was Takúka's creation of her stone coat. A second name for the Stone Giants was "Stone Coats" or "Stone Jackets," which is precisely what Takúka is shown creating.[108] The Stone Giant, *Ocasta*, was credited with creating the first Stone Jacket when he saw that the people who were normally his prey had created flint-tipped weapons. After hiding and watching one man kill a deer using bow and flint-tipped arrow, *Ocasta* realized with an unpleasant start that flint-tipped arrows and spears could also penetrate his bear suit. He then gathered up chert, enough to weave together in a sort of stone-mail jacket, which he figured would deflect the flint tips shot at him.[109] The idea caught on, and soon Stone Jackets were all the fashion among the Giants. Thus, anyone Indigenous hearing Takúka's tale would shudder when she put stones around her chest and back in a jacket. Listeners would know that there was no going back, that the die had been cast on her fate.

Aside from stone coats and height—at least a head taller than other people—Giants differed from the original populations primarily in their social codes, especially around what constituted proper food. A Shawnee tale presented a specific lineage of Shawnee gradually shifting into giantism as, like Takúka, they "forgot the rules of humanity," that is, they became cannibals.[110] Conversely, there were Giants who turned into humans. The Wyandot tradition of traveling south when the relentless snows hit, explained that once south, the proto-Wyandot began to hunt. However, finding food became an ongoing struggle, with some turning to cannibalism

out of desperation, thus slowly shape-shifting into *Strendu*, the Flint (Stone) Giants. One hunter encountering a *Strendu* in the south gave him warm deer fat to drink. It caused the *Strendu*'s stone coat to slip off his body, till by degrees he transformed back into a human.[111]

The last Stone Giant of the Seneca likewise became "more human," his spirit "quelled" from living alone in a cave.[112] Traditionally, Ayonwantha ("Hiawatha") was also an Iroquoian cannibal, who was converted to a deer diet by the great Peacemaker of the twelfth-century epoch of the Great Law.[113] Cusick (Tuscarora) told of a giant boy born to a human woman living in her hometown, suggesting that she had been rescued, bringing her blended boy home with her. The child grew into a menace, constantly beating up his playmates, but his mother "would correct him" till he promised to behave. Thereafter, he became an asset to the community.[114]

Giants in Their Bear Suits

The similarity of description between the bears and the Stone Giants is palpable, making it easy to conflate them. Consequently, traditions of actual bears, whether short-faced bears or later black bears, grizzlies, brown bears, red bears, or polar bears, must be distinguished from those of hominid Stone Giants. Many stories exist of bears living with humans, and many of those tales involved biological bears. Into recorded times, if a cub were orphaned, especially in a hunt that inadvertently killed its mother, then the cub was taken home to be raised. For instance, on December 16, 1634, Harmen van den Bogaert saw a bear that lived in its own little house in a Mohawk town. "It had been in there almost three years," he said, "and was so tame that it ate everything given it."[115] In 1632, Gabriel Sagard saw more than one "tame" bear being kept by various peoples. Two tame "bear-cubs, as big as sheep," that he saw with the Algonkins were "constantly running, wrestling, and playing together." When mealtime came, the cubs would vie with him to take away his food.[116] Although in some Western texts, these cubs are presented as having been "pets," this is not quite correct.[117] The suggestion of the primary texts is that they were being raised as festival food.[118] Their pelts were then used by spirit workers.

As depicted in old graphics as well as in recent lore, those holy people engaged in bear rituals, especially healing ceremonies, dressed in full-on bearskins.[119] (See Figs. 2.1 and 2.2). This was so well known that, in 1827,

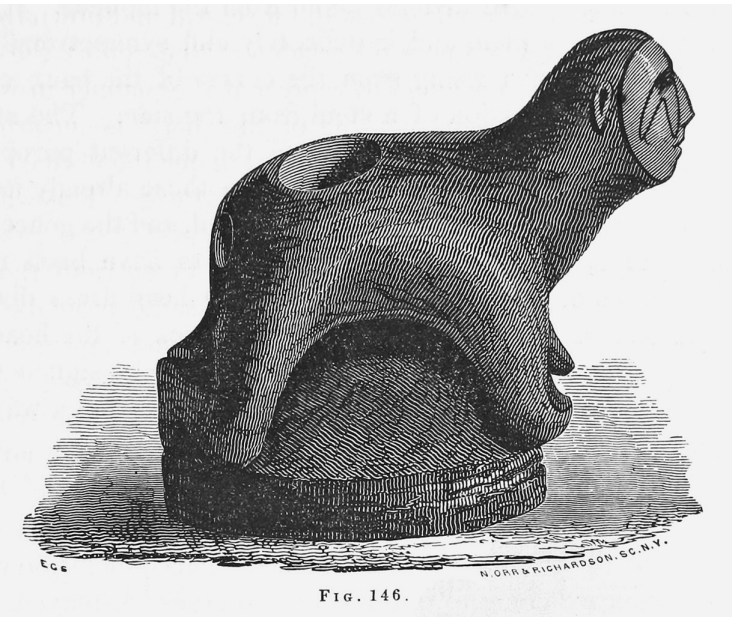

FIG. 146.

Figure 2.1 Bear man pipes from "Mound City Group," Chillicothe, Ohio, ca. 100 BCE–500 CE.

Source: Ephraim George Squier and Edwin Hamilton Davis, *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley: Comprising the Results of Extensive Original Surveys and Explorations* (New York: Bartlett & Welford; Cincinnati, OH: J. A. & U. P. James, 1848), 247–48. Image used courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

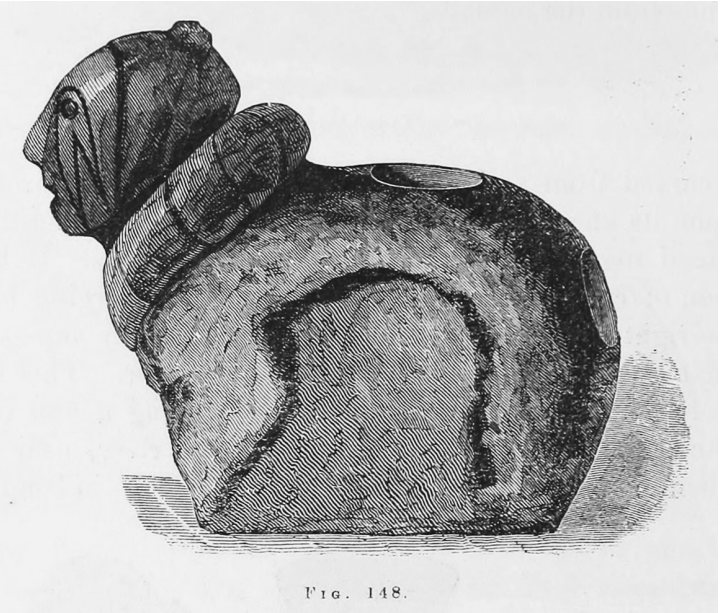
FIG. 148.

Figure 2.2 Bear man pipes from "Mound City Group."

Source: Squier and Davis, *Ancient Monuments*, 248–49. Image used courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.

James Fenimore Cooper left a strong depiction of, first, Hawkeye, and then his Lenape character, Uncas, taking turns impersonating a bear shaman to escape captivity.[120] The resultant performances were not as unlikely as modern literary critics might suppose. A painting by George Caitlin while he was at Fort Union, a trading post on the Upper Missouri River, depicted a bearskinned holy man performing a ritual over a Blackfeet chief who had been shot.[121] Such impersonations were commonplace, and I strongly suspect that they began long ago, during the Younger Dryas, while life was uncertain and bears took on new meaning. No longer Naked Bears, they now bore fur, which helped people survive the deep cold.

I suspect that bears and Giants also became interchangeable in tradition during this period, not the least because the most dangerous potencies are never to be named directly, lest they inadvertently be called to the speaker. Instead, they are circumlocuted.[122] Thus, meteors turn into Fire Dragons of Discord; Horned Serpents become Wormy Ones. If a feared Black Bear is killed, the hunter might say, "I killed a raccoon" (bear and raccoon are sibling spirits).[123] The Cherokee hunting song for bear uses "good black things" to indicate the Black Bear.[124] Tall cannibals are pretty scary, too, so they might well have been euphemized as "bears," even as bears became "good black things." (See Fig. 2.3.)

As the Pleistocene dissolved into the Younger Dryas after 12,900 BP, *Ursus americanus*, the American black bear, ramped up to fill the niche left when short-faced bears died out.[125] Notably, even as bears shrank from the short-faced bear to the modern ursa, so did the Stone Giants, who became conflated with bears and "married" to Indigenous women. There, the resemblance ends, however. Unlike the honorable Ursa, who married and protected women, the Stone Giants were horrifically immoral and breathtakingly cruel. This was partly due to giant morality, which was nothing like Indigenous American morality. The rest no doubt had to do with the Giants' penchant for munching on humans. Giants saw themselves as different from and higher than humans, while their comparative size made it hard for humans to argue the point. Giants stole human women for sex and breeding, keeping the tallest children while killing the rest. Giants also killed their victims when they tired of them or, perhaps, when the women were too injured to be of any further use to their purposes. In these tales, human cultural heroes rescue giant-kidnapped women.[126]

In a Menominee tradition, for instance, the cultural hero Ball Carrier is about his business of wiping out all the oversized creatures dangerous to

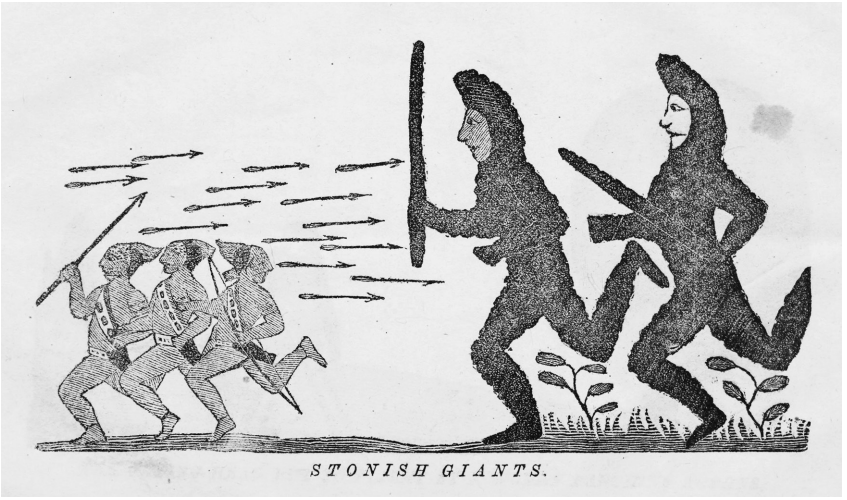

Figure 2.3 "Stonish Giants," or cannibal giants, chasing "normal" humans. Illustration by David Cusick (Tuscarora).

Source: 1840 edition of David Cusick, *Sketches of Ancient History of the Six Nations* (Lewiston, NY: Printer for the Author, 1827), preceding part 1, p. 1.

human existence, when a beautiful woman rushes screaming to him "in great distress," begging him to protect her from a giant in pursuit of her. Together, they cook up a scheme to do in her stalker. She is to return to the giant, explaining that Ball Carrier is up, ahead, so that in hopes of a two-course meal, the giant will follow her to Ball Carrier. The giant does follow, with "several children" whom he has bagged, swinging from his belt, mostly likely as his appetizers. This is the standard description of Giants, their habits, and their tastes. (Yes, Ball Carrier, the woman, and her kin did manage to dispose of the Giant.)[127]

The Lenape described the hominid "giants" as "tall and stout," being of a "much larger size than the tallest of the Lenape," without saying how tall that was.[128] (See Fig 2.3.) These Giants were also uniformly cannibals; that is, they ate the human beings keeping the traditions.[129] For instance, in one Iroquoian story, a "party of hunters were once in pursuit of a bear, when they were attacked by a monster stone giant, and all but three destroyed."[130] In the same vein, a Jicarilla Apache "bear" story makes no bones at all that the "bear" is actually a cannibal, the common description of a Stone Giant. This "bear" was killing people, one by one, as they went berry-picking, so the town militia tracked him to his lair, where they found "his coat (bearskin)

which he wore when he came after the people." Underneath the bear coat, he had armor made of "braided sticks." Not only that, but when the militia found him, he turned out to have been Mescalero or Kiowa Apache, but they killed him, anyway, for his crimes.[131] This story is too directly descriptive not to mean some sort of hominid.

The Shawnee directly present Stone Giants as lost humans.[132] One of the early clans of the Shawnee became lost from their main cohort, becoming "vagrants" who "forgot the rules of humanity." First, heedlessly, they "began to eat their meat in the raw flesh," which eventually transformed them into the lawless Giants, who would eat anything, including fellow humans, whom they stopped seeing as part of their "us."[133] The Tuscarora also talk about a set of people separated from their group during a dangerous crossing of the Ohio River. Braided and twisted vines were strung across the river as ropes, with young men helping folks across the waters, by clutching the vines in one hand and holding those crossing in the other, as they made their way from shore to shore. Alas, a portion of the people were stranded on the wrong side of the river, "on account of the vine broke." The main group went on without the rest, leaving the remnant to fend for themselves. Under duress, like the Shawnee remnant, this group became *Genonsgwa*: Stone Giants.[134]

A Sauk Meskwaki story of "bears" as hominid begins "a long time ago," when all "eleven families" (clans) of the Meskwaki were "surrounded by the Comanches," certain that the Comanche intended to kill them in their sleep. Their towns were already burned to the ground, forcing the Meskwaki to flee for their lives. Deciding that attack was the best defense, the young men crept up on the Comanche, clubbing them in their sleep. As they closed in on the last Comanche man, he suddenly turned into a grizzly bear, attacking them with fury. Under attack, one Meskwaki yelled to his companions, "Stand and fear him!" for fear is connected with fighting for one's life. After quite a resistance, the grizzly broke down in tears and was killed. With the death blow, he instantly resumed his human shape.[135] We have obviously peered into a time of dramatic strife, when humans and bears easily fused and survival was a matter of kill or be killed.

The Meskwaki killers were traveling with their sacred bundle, "Thunder-Sauk-Sacred-Pack," a skin given them by a Sky Manitou friendly to them who had been feeding them from his pack (say, like comets dropping whales as they whizzed by). Not eating at all for eight days after they had killed the Grizzly Man, the crew at last ate from the bundle. Now, their leader told them, "finally, you must begin to hunt." Accordingly, they "killed much

game," roasting and eating it "bounteously." Next the Meskwaki men killed a town of Arapaho, completing their attack by defecating and urinating on the dead, before they hunted turkey, again eating everything they killed. Next they ate snapping turtles. The leader of all this mayhem was named "Green Bear."[136]

Clearly, slaying humans in war was seen as being closely connected to hunting for food, as modeled and authorized by Green Bear and his sacred bundle. The Comanche man so cruelly slain was presented as a trapped grizzly bear, while the man commanding the slaying is also a bear. Violence had become the anointed order of the day, with the author of the violence undistracted by sexual intercourse, refusing all the "maidens" offered to him.[137] This last echoes a long-standing tradition forbidding sexual relations while at war, for women make life from blood, but all that men can make from blood is death. Mixing the two blows back on the man.[138] The eight days prior to eating after killing the Comanche were probably spent in sweating, for again, men must purify themselves after killing anything, and these Meskwaki men had killed a lot.

Perhaps not unconnected with this unsavory tale is the tradition of the Giants as immoral invaders, and the invaders here might well have been the Meskwaki who ran about committing atrocities, for atrocity was the Giants' middle name. A Diné tradition shows the Giants as coming in with the megafauna, with both Giants and megafauna menacing humanity.[139] This was seconded by an Iroquoian tale. Newly emergent from under ground, the *Ongwe* and *Wakonnyh Howeh* (Male and Female Shining People) were set upon by giant invaders, the *Rannon-gwetowanca*. Pouring down from the north, these Giants specialized in sneak attacks but only when assured of victory. Clan brothers sought out a sister kidnapped by one of these Giants, with one lineage brother visiting as a guest till the Giant murdered him in his sleep, throwing his carcass into a cave he used for food storage. Then came the youngest of the brothers, *Donhtonha*, seeking his brother and sister. *Donhtonha* cleverly prevailed against the Giant, but his sister fled him, for she had come to love the Giant. At this point, the siblings of the tale become night stars: *Donhtonha* in the east and his sister in the north.[140] East and North are spirit return points for earth, indicating that both died. Significantly, this giant tale follows the same script as pure Bear marriage tales.

Ordinary people were terrified of the Stone Giants. Ceremonial dance has, as one goal, attaining control over a situation of concern. Thus, the Dakota "giant dance" was executed by women as well as men, with both moving

"around a large kettle of boiling meat," thrusting their arms into the soup to pull out meat "without burning themselves." This was in reference to cannibalism, which was greatly feared by the targets of the Giants' dinner menu. As such, it performed Dakota control over the situation—the dancers were pulling out the meat, not being the meat.[141] (Holy people knew how to coat body parts with Malvaseae-based retardants, preventing burns during quick, in-and-out boiling grabs, in a technique still used.)[142]

Hunting was clearly traumatic, both for the new hunter and for those with the experience of being the prey. Hence, whether to kill a bear was a consideration of some moment, especially any bear likely to weep over his imminent demise. Poignant bear-killing tales begin about now. One Iroquoian tale featured two medicine cub-boys, one a born bear cub and the other a human rescue child, both succored by a she-bear in a hollow tree. The cub-boy was later discovered by his human father, who declined to kill the bear out of gratitude. Instead, both cub-boys trekked west to kill the outsized megafauna, as a public service to other hunters and humanity in general.[143]

In a Seneca tale, being fond of his noncannibal nephew, the man-eating Denoiot kept him around but in a separate area, to prevent any late-night snacking on him. Besides, the nephew was good for marrying tender women, who would then disappear down Denoiot's gullet. The last wife was spared, but only because her husband, an enraged Giant pursuing her, offered a better meal for Denoiot than did she. Finally, the nephew and his latest wife left for his human kin, but in crossing a river, they wound up on an ice flow that took them directly to a "dozen howling warriors." Denoiot saved them from death, thus gaining twelve delicious dinners before tracking the couple to their village, where children began mysteriously disappearing, one by one, giving Denoiot a savage case of indigestion, which his nephew cured by feeding his uncle human food. Eventually, in exchange for hanging about, Denoiot switched entirely to a human diet of "fruits and roots and meat," courtesy of a wife whom he refrained from munching on.[144]

Notably, Denoiot is, himself, a Giant because he is able to prevail against (and then eat) not only another Giant but also twelve heavily armed "warriors." Having human lineal kin suggests that Denoiot's nephew had at least a partly human-descended mother, making him the offspring of both Giants' and humans, but he chose his human half and roped his uncle into doing the same, suggesting that Denoiot was also dually descended. This is really a story about two groups with very different moral codes learning to

coexist. These stories clearly indicate that cannibals and humans were pretty much the same critters, just following different roads to survival in a difficult environment.

Human women obviously had some credit with Giants, perhaps from being necessary to Giant procreation. In a Secwépemc (Shuswap) story, a young wife supplied her husband with four special arrows, which he was to reserve for when danger threatened him. Heedlessly, he used them to hunt, instead, easily bagging mountain sheep. While eating some before heading home, he was approached by "four men" carrying spears that, ominously enough, dangled "strings of human nails and teeth, which made a jingling noise as they walked." Frightened by their "fierce" appearance, one by one, he fed them all his kill, but they still demanded food. After holding them off briefly through a ruse, the hunter took off at a dead run, as he seemed to be next on their menu. Nearing exhaustion, he encountered a group of women and pleaded for aid. Now, through their powers of conception, women have the mystical potency to grow or shrink humans, so they instantly shrank the hunter to a baby, put him in a cradle board, and assured the Giants that the man whom they sought was nowhere about. Once the disappointed Giants had left, the women regrew the hunter and sent him home to his wife, who informed him that he had foolishly used his Giant-piercing arrows on the mountain sheep. Oops.[145]

In the 1854 Nakota story above, of the earth robbed of her seasons, the finale is the woman's return to her people with a child conceived in rape by the cruel men among whom she had lived. When her brothers found her, the first thing her child did was to comment upon how succulent they looked: "Mother, what fine, fat men; kill one of them that I may eat some good meat." When she fled home with her brothers, the woman took this child along, but once she was home, her people held a "long council," during which it was decided that the cannibal child must not be allowed to grow up. Consequently, the mother killed her own child "to prevent the propagation of the race of cannibals." Thereafter, the mother was "changed into a body of fire," becoming Sirius, while her brothers turned into the seven stars chasing the Bear, Ursa Major.[146]

This is a dire tale, which flips back and forth between the action of a kidnapped, gang-raped woman and the rationale for why she, her child, and her brothers must die. At first, the woman is Mother Earth, stripped of her robes of trees, animals, flowing water, and crops, a description of the pleasant, pre–Younger Dryas world giving way to the glaciation that so many

traditions describe. Next, she is a raped human captive among "cannibals," bearing a mixed-heritage child. Brought home by clan brothers with her "cannibal" child in tow, she, her child, and her brothers (who brought them both into the midst of humans) are executed, to prevent any kind of further intercourse with cannibal neighbors. These victims become stars because Indigenous North American tradition holds that the Breath Spirits of humans walk the stars upon death; that is, their deaths are ritualistic. We do not learn how the brothers died, but the woman was burned in some sort of auto-da-fé, after having been forced to kill her own child. This action begins to shed light on all these Bears whom the women were "marrying" and sometimes loving; Bears capable of speech and of tears; Bears able to produce viable offspring with humans.

After the Stars Fell: Bear Marriage Interruptus

When nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthropologists "collected" a Menominee Bear marriage tale, they missed the Bear marriage and sky connections in their eagerness to present it as a story about the Giant-connected trickster, Manabush (also "Nanabush"). On Turtle Island, most creation tales involve a twisted younger twin, and Manabush is no exception, being an offal boy, born of the deceased younger twin of Menominee lore.[147] Thus twice removed from sagacity and self-control, Manabush is a real pip. Here, as Giant-connected if not always on the best terms with Giants, he harbors ongoing enmity toward Bears.[148] By contrast, there is his Grandmother. She is *Nokomis*, the First Mother.[149] She is connected to Beaver. After the very "first animals" died in creation tradition, they shape-shifted into hominids, with First Bear becoming a man and First Beaver a woman.[150] Bear takes care of Beaver.[151]

One day, the foolish, oblivious, and incompetent Manabush came to *Nokomis* with his shocking plan to kill Beaver, but Underground Bear overheard his foul design. To thwart it by scaring off Manabush, Underground Bear (male) set up the frightening cries of the Underground Panther (female), and it worked, for Manabush is a consummate coward. Carrying his old grandmother on his back, along with their packs, Manabush hurried to a new camp. Upon arrival, he heedlessly dropped Grandmother on the ground so hard that he knocked her out for some time (perhaps a commentary on the comet's effect on earth), deeply angering her when she

came to.[152] It might have been this misdeed that called Bear, as his job is to protect women, the Beaver people.

After fumbling to erect a wigwam, the pair subsisted on acorns. Manabush wandered far afield in search of the nuts (partly because he liked to travel), while Grandmother extracted and prepared their nut meat, attracting a large, hungry Bear to her hut. Following her into the wigwam, Bear spoke kindly to her, asking to spend the night on her couch with her, and she happily agreed. The next day, once Manabush had wandered off again, Grandmother combed her hair and painted her cheeks with red circles, as one does to signal a desire to see a Bear husband. Accordingly, Bear came. Feeding him the lovingly prepared acorn meat, Grandmother again lay with him. This time, though, Manabush came home early and caught an eyeful. Disturbed, he lay awake late into the night, concocting his plan to murder his Grandmother's Bear husband.[153]

Tracking Bear to his den the next day, Manabush shot into its opening with sharp arrows. Bear staggered forth a short distance before dropping dead in his tracks, leaving Manabush to rush home, announcing his kill. Grandmother's reaction is not reported in the story as "collected," but it can be gathered from her actions. Manabush and Grandmother skinned her Bear lover, but it was traumatic for her. When Manabush packed up the meat, she invented reasons not to carry it: "the teeth will bite me; the claws will scratch me"—that is, she would become a Bear herself, a threat meant to frighten Manabush. Having arrived home with his pack, Manabush wondered why Grandmother yet lingered behind. Sneaking back, he saw her grieving, mournfully stroking Bear's dismembered hindquarters.[154]

Furious and lacking any impulse control, Manabush promptly beats to death the Grandmother whom he has always followed around like a puppy. (Bear is no longer there to stop him.) Realizing too late what he has done and fearing discovery as well as loneliness, Manabush flings *Nokomis* into the sky, where she becomes Grandmother Moon. Now and for as long as the earth shall last, Grandmother Moon looks down upon the earth, home of Underground Bear, the elder spirit of her beloved Bear husband. Some claim that red spots still adorn her cheeks, when she looks down, full-faced (that is, as a harvest moon).[155] She approaches Bear in his sky manifestation as Ursa Major during every March equinox, as he emerges from his cave in spring.[156] This is when the moon is in her closest approach to earth. In her "classic horizon version," she can again seem to be reddish in color, and not just on her cheek spots.[157]

Clearly, in this tale, *Nokomis* loved her Bear husband to death, as he loved her. In a practical sense, just as in the Dakota tale, once the double murder of mother and child was completed, the ritual established a continuation through sky-earth mirroring. Because the female Moon is still in love with the Bear of Sky, the rebirth of spring is the result. This would have been profound thirteen thousand years ago. Modern research shows that (absent artificially lighted nights), women's menstrual cycles tend to start at full or new moons. Ovulation precedes menses, so that it, too, occurs around the same times. These cycles responded both to lunar light and to gravimetrics, being "intermittently synchronous" with both, "strongly suggesting that both cycles influence reproduction in humans."[158] Thus, as in the Titonwan Lakota (Brulé) tradition, comprehension flooded the first woman "through that birth cord which connects her to the moon and whose power she still feels at her moon time."[159]

When the stars fell, survivors of the sudden nuclear winter had to reorganize cultural structures to survive. Not all received the memo on communalism, with most Stone Giants working only for themselves in blind selfishness. In such times, anything that could be reborn with the spring in the Long Winter of the Younger Dryas must have seemed a mystery and a gift, one that mourning humans longed to possess, too. The *Nokomis* tradition, then, is moored to Underground and Sky Bear through the moon in her cycles, in the cave of her womb. Sky Bear signals the renewal of conception, the reconstitution of life from death through moon times, no doubt a heartening message following the comet swarm of 12,900 BP. The life of the Bear husband is a gift, not a sacrifice, for sacrifice is an improper model, chosen by an official, who is not the one making the sacrifice. A juridical concept, sacrifice bespeaks the punitive control of patriarchy, a Giant social form.[160] By contrast, in the righteous "human" form, giving is chosen by the giver, the matriarchal form.

Starving people who had formerly relied upon grains and fruits had to come to terms with killing animals to eat, with some turning Giant to eat fellow humans, yet all mimicking Bear, living underground and wearing fur. A Nakoda Oyadebi right-way story demonstrated mutual kindness and gratitude, juxtaposed to Giant cruelty. A woman was running away from her cruel husband, back to her own family. As night came on, she bedded down in an empty Bear den, but as she was drifting to sleep, she heard the Bear coming and feared greatly for her life. Growling, the Bear held his paw out to her: it had been rammed through by a "stick" (probably an arrow). Seeing his

pain, she gently removed the stick from his paw using her teeth. In gratitude, he described her route ahead, alerting her to avoid the "bad people" in the first encampment, after which she would encounter "friends" in the next. It happened as Bear said, so she was found by her brother.[161] Clearly, the point here was reciprocal kindnesses as modeled by the woman and the Bear, who was probably a Giant.

A twist on who marries whom comes in a triply recorded Nakoda Oyadebi story, showing a man marrying a sow Bear. The couple live in the Bear's cave, until the man returns safely to his town, only to be traced there by his Bear wife, who immediately beds down with him. Although afraid of her, the townsfolk shower her with gifts at the request of the young man, after which she returns home to her den. A cub-boy is born of the marriage, and the Bear wife is again showered with gifts, just before the cub-boy moves to his father's town. The Bear mother concedes that, had the cub-boy been born with "fur" like hers, she would have kept him, but he is "of human shape." Growing to manhood, the cub-man becomes a noted defender of his father's people.[162] Here, the fertile mother was highly honored by the father's clan, in the first set of gifts that recognized the marriage. The second gifting echoed the custom of giving the maternal lineage lavish gifts if its children were to have been taught by a nonmaternal lineage, as with cub-boy's human education.[163] This Bear marriage modeled proper behavior around gift-giving, in-law relations, and childrearing.

To express what proper morality looked like, then, Bear husbands embody frequent, stylized conventions, using the melds so common in Indigenous American lore. As a result, although earlier woman-bear traditions existed, the Woman Who Married the Bear took on new significance when the stars fell. Bear marriages reassured frightened people that endless renewal results from sharing all that one has, including life—even with Giants. The hope in Indigenous American stories remains not in Bear's death, but in his subsequent resuscitation, as he shape-shifts into renewed life. This was magical prowess that humans wanted, too, especially once the climate turned on them.

No doubt, many of the men in the new and frightening reality of the Younger Dryas did die in service to the common good, so that the Bear husband modeling proper morality was of paramount importance. He recognized that it was the woman who must survive to bring forth life in a newly balanced world, and for this he is loved. Together with Grandmother Moon, Ursa Major became the primary sky reflection of Indigenous

continuance. Both are constantly visible in the global northern night sky, which probably buoyed people struggling daily for survival, while the resuscitation of Bear comforted people unused to murdering animals to survive. The bad Bear husband was about killing, but the good Bear husband was about renewal, resuscitation, giving, reciprocity, and love in the face of overwhelming odds. As we reenter extremes times, in extreme climes, it behooves us to consider the former wisdom of Good Bear, and see how the Bear below the ground and Bear above in the sky helped his little hominid wife persevere on a changing planet.

PART II

INDIGENOUS EURASIA AND THE EUROPEAN NORTH

Indigenous Eurasia underwent change from the comet swarm of 12,900. The old matriarchal mythology of renewal through pregnancy, as symbolized by the marriage of women and bears was sharply revised. Especially during the bronze age, violence against the bear husband and repression of the woman became the norm, as women were equated with danger and bears, with the proper prey of hunters. Still, echoes of the old traditions lingered.[1]

3

Original Instructions

Bear Spirituality and Great Mothers

by Kaarina Kailo

Long, long ago, Bera, the Bear woman, transmitted the "Original Instructions" to her people.[1] Bera gained this knowledge through the medium of the Bear, and it is repeated across the Eurasian North, in ancient Finno-Ugric, Russian, Celtic-Irish, Armenian, Siberian, and Turkish traditions. Surviving oral stories show the close, cognitive links among the bear's den, the sauna, the womb, the moon, menstruation, childbirth, and endurance, if one knows how to look for them.[2] Traces of the biocosmic sense of old ecospirituality linger in re/birth- and fertility-oriented spring festivals continuing to this day as elements of both mother- and bear-worship, with extant bear rituals extending from alpine France to Spain and Romania. All derive from the story of the Woman Who Married the Bear.

The Woman Who Married the Bear in her many manifestations, Bera was the epitome and core icon of bear spirituality. Remaining vestiges of the woman-Bear bond sum up the marriage of ecological wisdom traditions in the gifts of nonhuman entities centering on Bear. Focusing on the Bear marriage as a vestige of initiation rituals, I consider the bear in birth, in water, and in the earth goddess, as I summarize the themes that the motif includes in its cross-cultural variants in wisdom traditions. Combined, they form a linchpin, allowing me to reconstruct the ancient spring whose festivals of regeneration celebrate the feminine divine across Ireland, Northern Europe, and Eurasia. Now, through this research, the bear goddesses of these regions awaken from their ten-thousand-year hibernation to dance into view.

Although variants of the Woman Who Married the Bear have been multiply analyzed, discourse has skipped the context of the Bear mother's Original Instructions as reflections of a prepatriarchal, matristic worldview.[3]

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To date, the predominately male scholars of the Western mainstream have suffered from hormonal anemia when evaluating old Eurasian artifacts and "mentifacts" that support the view of a hybrid Mother Goddess–Bear.[4] If "ownership of the past" truly offers "control of the future," as Mary Condren asserts, then excavating the fragments of surviving Bear traditions provides glimpses of an ancient worldview from the Paleolithic to the modern.[5] Narrative fragments center on a woman marrying—or at least spending a winter with—the bear, but this signal fact is rarely included as the key element of broader analyses of bear ceremonials or the bear mythology.

Excavating through the debris imposed on Bera by "malestream" Western scholarship, let us look at the differences between conjugal stories of women-bears and those of male hunting as they pop up in principles of life and death, the gift economy, and sacrificial slaying.[6] We will find ourselves hot on the trail of ancient egalitarianism as we unearth the balancing acts of women's sacred rituals. It made hunting sustainable instead of feckless.

To honor this important point, one must be open to new scholarship regarding Old Europe's matristic cultures, crediting Indigenous scholarship that reveals the central status of grandmothers in Native cultures.

Elements of Bear ceremonialism are believed to date from the European Middle Paleolithic, with convincing evidence that bear spirituality may be none other than the first religion. Indeed, the myth of the self-sacrificing "son" of a sky spirit, as Bear, is present thousands of years before Christianity. Archaeological finds suggest that bears may have been associated with northern traditions as early as 80,000–120,000 BP.[7] This is well after Neanderthal and humans separated from the Denisovans, but also during the period of heavy intermating among the three groups and their introgressions.[8] These very early dates may well account for the extensive spread of Bear-woman lore across Eurasia. The Ainu of Japan, northern Eurasian Gilyak and Siberian peoples, and Finno-Ugric peoples like the Sami, the Finns, and, particularly, the Hanti and Mansi celebrated the bear through elaborate bear hunt rituals and communal feasts. (See Fig. 3.1.)

There has, however, been a hobbling skew to the way that studies have focused on a male "god" and "his son," borrowings from much later Middle Eastern traditions. The studies of bear ceremonials focus on male hunting, with the bear hunt and the feast following the "home-bringing" of the slain bear symbolically thanking and entertaining its skull, returned "home" for resurrection. Alternatively, the scholars focus on the son or sons to whom the woman gave birth after spending the winter with the bear. Thus, Jean de l'ours (John of

Figure 3.1 Hanti-Mansi bear ceremonial, The Bay of the Holy Dog. From the exhibition "Tales and culture of the Siberian Indigenous peoples from Hanti-Mansi," South Karelia Museum, April 13–September 29, 2019.
Photograph by Irma Heiskanen, May 29, 2019. Used with permission.

the bears) continues to attract attention even in today's bear carnivals in alpine Europe, whereas the mother who gave him birth is left on the back burner, like Virgin Mary, a mere prelude to the important "master narrative." Modern matriarchal studies have exposed the way in which such a plot epitomizes the shift from matriarchal to patriarchal narration and lifeways, although it has not focused on Bear spirituality as such. Alas, the mighty male hunter plot flies in the face of cross-cultural evidence of a worldview honoring both bears and great mothers (grandmothers). The bear husband is the protagonist, not later male hunters who kill him. Celebrations were about renewal and rebirth. They dealt with respect and mutuality, the recognition of how human persons are interconnected with nonhuman persons, that is, the Original Instructions. The core issue was the respectful and thankful treatment of Bear by humans.

Lithuanian scholar Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994) founded the field of archaeomythology, which includes archaeology, comparative mythology, and folklore. In 1989, she contended that scholars to date had simply "ignored . . . rich archaeological sources" that pointed to the existence of "two different symbolic systems," one "matristic-gylanic" and the other

"androcratic."[9] The relatively modern patriarchal conventions, methods, and assumptions simply cannot tease out the meanings of the Great Mother of high antiquity, but the methods of modern matriarchal and Indigenous studies may help, as might the newly emergent fields of archaeomythology and feminist theology. (See Fig. 3.2.)

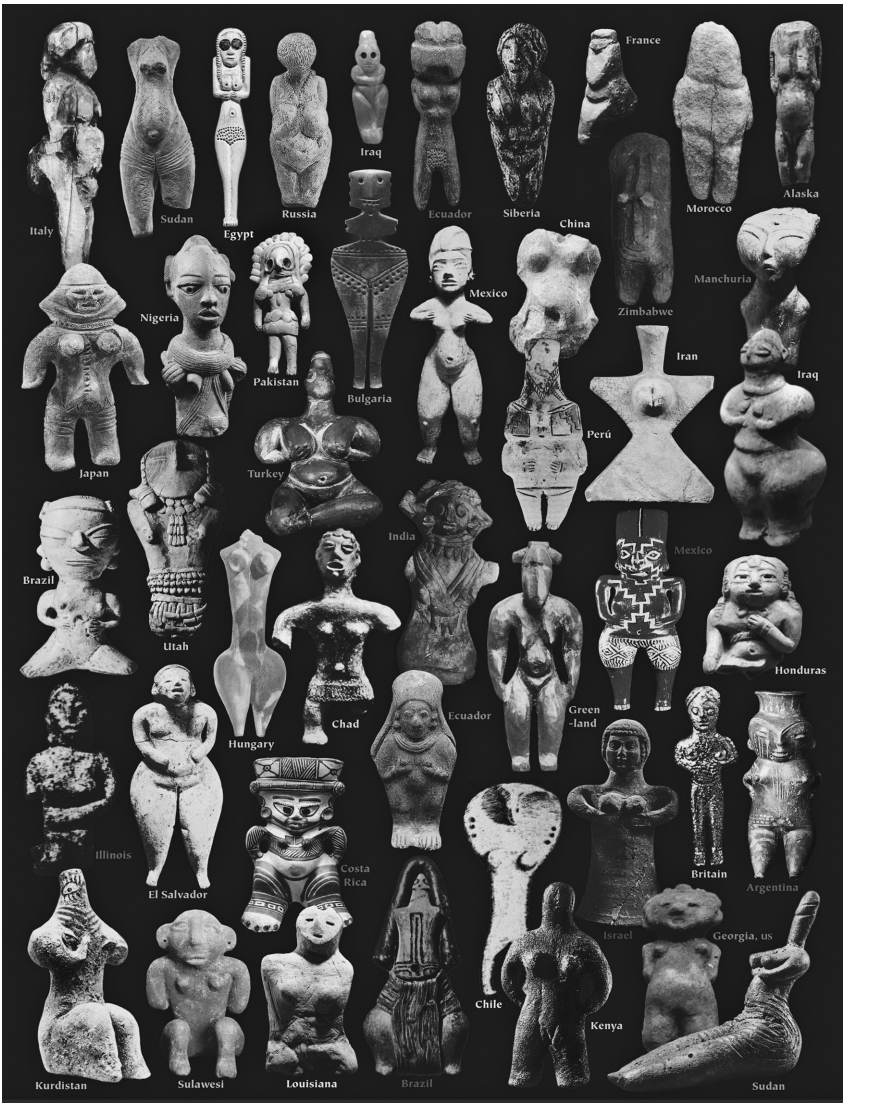

Figure 3.2 Icons of ancestral mothers from around the world.
Female icons © 2008 Max Dashu (www.veleda.net/femaleicons.html).

The many historical layers of the tales featuring the Bear marriage allow us to scratch the surface, discovering woman-positive eras of high antiquity whose earth and birth spirits regularly show a young girl initiating her brother, lover, or other cultural heroes through tests, quests, and the sacred marriage. This plotline was only recently (relatively speaking) replaced by a patriarchal plot in which brothers rescue their sisters from the claws of a lethal bear lover, with or without her consent. Thus, Bear woman traces a premonotheistic, archaic worldview whose artifacts and mentifacts differ radically from those of patriarchal cultures of the Bronze Age around 5,000 BP.[10] Whereas the worldview and context of the Paleolithic Bear woman symbolizes what I call the "gift imaginary," uniting the genders around a matrix of nonpatriarchal values, Bronze Age Bear expresses what we might term the "master imaginary," a juridical matrix that separates the genders to emphasize taking, not giving.[11]

When exactly Gimbutas's "two different symbolic systems" separated, and why, is unclear, but we can make out intriguing echoes of what was going on in both the Gilgamesh legend of Sumer and the Hou Yi legend of China. The main characters in Gilgamesh centered around the Sumerian city of Ur about 8,000 BP. We have the "king" Gilgamesh (who was "two-thirds god") and his best friend, Enkidu.[12] If Gilgamesh was an urbanite, then Enkidu was a "hairy-bodied wild man."[13] In speaking of those behind-the-timers from whom Enkidu sprang, the Sumerian epic showed them as "grazing with the gazelles and the other beasts on the grass of the grasslands," in other words, subsisting on grains, alone. These throwbacks also followed the animals' tracks to use the same "watering places"—with the consent of the animals.[14] Similarly, when Enkidu died, the gazelles and even the panthers mourned his passing.[15] Gilgamesh can speak, for instance, with the Male and Female Twin Monsters and the Scorpion Monster Being.[16] There are other traditions of Middle Easterners being able to converse with the fauna as well. Of course, most Westerners are familiar with Balaam's talking ass, who shames Balaam for hitting her and also for assuming ownership of a living creature.[17] These passages about "wild" people who conversed with animals, respecting, honoring, and even copying their ways, strongly reflect the matriarchal principles of the Original Instructions.

Far from being presented as a wild man, Gilgamesh was the patriarchal tyrant of his city, ruling Ur mostly through terror, whereas his friend Enkidu originally hailed from a goddess culture, the "hair of his head" replicating the "grain fields of the goddess."[18] Gilgamesh does not much appreciate the

goddess concept, although Enkidu pals around with him after an initial tussle.[19] (It is noteworthy how often patriarchal stories initiate male bonding with a fight to determine the alpha male of the pair. The bridge battle between Little John and Robin Hood springs to mind.) By this point, it is obvious that a patriarchal model is at hand, so when Ishtar proposes marriage to Gilgamesh, he turns her down coldly with insults. He calls her a door that leaked cold air; the sticky black pitch on a bucket; the house that collapsed; an ill-fitting, painful shoe; a crumbling wall; a hole-infested water skin; a black widow who killed her mates. Firmly spurning her advances, he asks why he should "eat the rotten food" she offers.[20]

Clearly, Gilgamesh and Ishtar are rivals in the god game. This is a pretty stark repudiation of goddess culture, presumably in favor of a male god culture. It is not unconnected to the betrayal of the goddess religion that Enkidu must die for his part in helping Gilgamesh kill the "demon Huwawa, Guardian of the Forest."[21] Entering the Netherworld on a mission for Gilgamesh, Enkidu is seized and held by the goddess of the Netherworld. "Ereshkigal the Queen it was who held him."[22] We see the struggle between the old matriarchy and the new patriarchy in action here. No one has confidently dated the Gilgamesh epic, but in the tale of Utnapishtim, it does describe the flooding of Ur, which has been recently dated to 5,000–7,000 BP, the Bronze Age.[23] This offers a quick-and-dirty timeline of the contest between matriarchal and patriarchal influences.[24]

If Gilgamesh kills the goddess-related, demonized forest beast Huwawa, then Hou Yi is the mighty archer of China.[25] Both the Gilgamesh and Hou Yi traditions emphasize the prowess of their male-identified, cultural heroes as great slayers of the oversized animals of the natural world. Like Gilgamesh slugging it out with Enkidu, Hou Yi fought and then befriended Feng Meng, who was, like Enkidu, a companion of almost his size and skill, but perhaps not fully human. Both seem to have turned their backs on the old ways. In these epics, hunting existed not for food but to quell the rampages of dangerous, giant animals and environmental forces of fire and water.[26] Again, the ancient Chinese epic of Hou Yi gives hints of a timeline. We know that frighteningly large animals were a consistently remarked feature of the Bölling–Allerød warming, which dates to around 15,000 BP. For a tradition of giant-animal slaying to resonate across geography and culture indicates a stirring of ancient memory. In these traditions, one from Mesopotamia and one from China, I suspect we gain a peek at the period of transition during a desperate human struggle against a changing environment. Perhaps the old

goddess religion with its Original Instructions was blamed for the world's going so horribly awry.

Gimbutas used the term "matristic," meaning "mother-centered," in specific reference to the sort of "goddess" culture that would have given rise to Enkidu's, and probably Feng Meng's, home cultures. These societies included male as well as female deities, with the female attached both to descent as counted through the mother and to "ancestor worship" of the "Sacred Original Mother" as the progenitor of the culture.[27] I apply this concept to the many variants I have collected of the Woman Who Married the Bear, concluding that its multiple cultural interpretations reflect the conventions and reader responses of different historical eras and cultures. Thus, we are misguided to look for one "authentic" story, plot, or structure. Although the variants have been analyzed ad nauseum, they have not so far been studied in the context of the Bear and Mother worship or as the Original Instructions that must necessarily reflect a pre- or nonpatriarchal worldview. (See Fig. 3.3.)

The gift imaginary is encoded on the deep level of society by internalized stories, ecomyths that naturalize, among other values, the interconnectedness of human and animal realms. This is a commonplace of Indigenous cultures, including that of the Finns, who were colonized by the Swedes, Norwegians, and Russians prior to our independence of 1917.[28] In numerous tales from North America to Europe and across Siberia to Asia, Bear was viewed as the executor of law, the keeper of justice. Execution has indeed followed those who failed to respect his land ethic. Whereas today we take oaths on the Bible, in the past, oaths were sworn in the name of the Bear and the Great Mother.[29] In one example from Finno-Ugric and Siberian lore, defendants would bite the hair of the animal, or its nose, claws, or teeth, saying: "If I am wrong, so bite me as I now bite thee."[30]

In many cultures, it is through elder women that this gift imaginary is typically ensconced and expressed by cultural rituals repeated annually. It provides a set of practices and values in which egalitarian kinship relations and interconnectedness transcend species, even as gender functions across generations, guaranteeing an eco-socially sustainable future. We understand how our actions impact each other, because we are One. This worldview is epitomized in the Finno-Ugric Golden Woman as a hybrid of the tree of life and Mother of human and nonhuman persons.[31] Oral storytellers transmit these ancient mentifacts to future generations through the key symbols of their peoples' mystical origin.

Figure 3.3 Ceramic figure of a woman or goddess with uplifted arms, Cyprus, 900–600 BCE. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Photograph by Mary Harrsch. Use permitted under a CC BY-SA 4.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en).

Ancient matriarchies and matristic cultures likely had social practices and values that led to an internalization of the Gift, whereas patriarchal societies brought us the juridical imaginary (what I call the master imaginary).

The two cannot be totally separated, leaving us with no pure imaginaries today, but rather, influences pulling us back and forth in multiple directions. We distinguish them as best we can through interspecies "feed-back."[32] The Finnish goddess I most associate with the gift imaginary is

Mielikki, who likes to please and provide game to hunters—provided they please her in return by respecting nature and the Bear mother.[33] To give back to Mielikki, then, evinces a worldview of balanced relations and a culture of reciprocity.

A nineteenth-century scholar of Finno-Ugric worldviews, John Abercromby, summed up many of the core elements of how Finno-Ugric animism orders reality. First and foremost, ancient Bear woman strove for balance among all moving and stationary entities, including sky and earth. Things might be good or they might be bad, so the trick was to catch entities on a good day and then approach them in the right way. Mielikki, Guardian of Bears and Forest, was relatively easy to please, not grouchy at all—unless she disliked particular prayers or offerings. At that point, her name changed to Kuurikki, the Deaf One.[34] Her displeasure attached to useless, dead-end gifts. As Lewis Hyde noted about gift-giving in archaic societies, the gift that is not used will be lost, whereas the gift that is passed along remains abundant. In the gift imaginary, "The circle of gifts enters the cycles of nature and, in so doing, manages not to interrupt them and not to place humans on the outside, beyond nature."[35] The concept of abundance in the gift, as opposed to the "premise of scarcity" in the exchange, results from humans recognizing that nature, itself, is the Gift.[36] When we fail to give back to Bear for providing us game (food), Nature takes revenge—as we now all can plainly see. Mielikki has turned her deaf ear to us. She is now Kuurikki.

Because the Bear marriage tale is so widely spread, has such a long history, and continues to be told at least among many Indigenous peoples, there must be more to it than meets the Western eye. Present in Nordic bear lore are recurrent motifs, themes, and plot structures that take a clear turn from archaic, mother-centrality to current, juridical patriarchalism of the master imaginary. Bear woman:

- Spends winter with bear in sacred marriage (archaic)
- Wakes up Bear, causing the return of the sun and fertility (archaic)
- Gives birth to the bear cub (archaic)
- Prepares the bear for the hunt and killing (archaic/juridical)
- Locates the den for hunters (archaic/juridical)
- Steps in a dunghill (archaic/juridical)
- Transgresses by insulting bear (juridical)
- Is seized, ravished, raped by bear as punishment (juridical)

Like my take on Gilgamesh, using other evidence, Gimbutas concluded that patriarchy hit the matristic scene and began the slow decimation of (wo)man-oriented lifeways some 5,000 years ago.[37] As shown in these pages, the origin of bear phenomena takes us much more deeply into the past than that, at least to 15,000 BP. Around 5,000 BP, shifts in the imaginary began to be seen in the concept of Milk, from breastfeeding provided by the woman to nurture the hibernating bear to something to be spilled upon the ground. Similarly, Blood moved from the woman's gift of menstruation to the symbol of hunters as killers of the risen bear. The very notion of gifting as juridical sacrifice changed the nonviolent menstrual blood ritual to human sacrifice of the living, as patriarchy sent its sons to un/holy wars, providing a gruesome new meaning to the gift of blood.[38] The Original Instructions were forgotten.

Famed bear scholar Irving Hallowell (1892–1974) first proposed a historical-geographical interpretation that focused on the structural affinities of the bear cults across global northern regions.[39] Part of his argument was that the similarities between the myths of the Siberian Ket people ("Ostyak") and North American Tlingit reflected early contacts across the Bering Strait.[40] Indeed, there are striking affinities between many artifacts and mentifacts across the Pacific, including the myths of totemistic maternal fore/Bears, bear spirituality, and the symbolic language of ornamentation. The affinities across North American and European stories, artifacts, and mentifacts are so striking that scholars continuously debate the direction the influences traveled between North America, Siberia, and other regions with similar stories.

Finland is one of the locales known for its rich and extensive folklore. Bear features as a powerful protagonist, especially in accounts of the bear ceremonial that Juha Pentikäinen, a well-known scholar of bear lore and shamanism, believes is our ancestors' ancient religion.[41] Among the songs, poems, legends, tales, incantations, and charms are variants of the Woman Who Married the Bear or more simple fragments of bear mythology involving women.[42] Importantly, Bear could not only understand speech, especially that of women, but also engaged in telepathic communication. In the past, women have been told to stay out of the bear's path for, if the woman is pregnant, the bear may seek rebirth through her.[43] I am not sure how bad that would be, but tradition also has bears killing pregnant women who carry boys (future hunters) but leave in peace those pregnant with a daughter.

Pentikäinen describes very early signs of the bear cult that were found in 1994 in the Rhone Valley of France in the cave of Chauvet, which dates to 33,000 BP: "The fifteen painted or carved depictions of bears, without eyes, are separated from the other animal pictures, pointing to an exceptional status." In the "so-called bear chamber," on a "chalk boulder" was a bear skull, "probably female," giving the impression of a body below the skull. Because the remains of another fifty bears were placed around this display, Pentikäinen imagined that she was the "ancestral mother bear."[44] Pentikäinen further inferred that the bear feast celebrating the slaying of a bear was actually a marriage ceremony in which the bear, having descended from the heavens, was conveyed back to his celestial origins. This ritual frequently had a totemic connection to a primordial, mythical coupling between Mother Bera and the Bear, granting the power and efficacy of those particular people.[45] Still, Pentikäinen hardly touches on the gender issues of the she-bear, the Mistress of Animals, ancestral mother, a commonplace among most scholars of the bear ceremonial.[46]

Indeed, the motif of a woman spending the winter with the bear is rarely included as part of the key elements in any broader analysis of the widely spread bear ceremonial by Western scholars. Seemingly causal connections among cross-cultural, pre-Paleolithic variants suggest a dialogical, parallel evolution of human-Bear relations around metamorphosis, either human-to-animal or animal-to-human. Other themes include the exploration of both moral and societal structures that give us clues about the Original Instructions. In their most distant layers, they echo the worldview labeled "animistic" and "shamanistic," assumed by some scholars to be matriarchal or matrilineal, for instance in Bachofen's *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right* and Gimbutas's *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*.[47]

In northern Eurasia, among several different cultures, there was belief that people were descendants of a union between a human goddess and the cosmic bear god. In the earliest layer of Sami mythology, the moon goddess Háhtežan was married to the cosmic bear. Many other cultures trace their descent from Bear, "spirit of the ancestors."[48] Kirsti Paltto, a Sami writer I have interviewed, gave me a story she wrote about a Sami man who married a she-bear.[49] Such stories are not as common as the marriages of bears and women, but they also exist across the global North.

The work of Annine Van der Meer shows how widespread goddess cultures have been in the world and for how long—at least forty thousand years.[50] The

origin stories and cultural ceremonies springing from them obviously go together, so the Bear marriage has everything to do with how our ancestors saw their genealogical roots. There can be no feast for the slain bear unless there is first a mother who gives birth and produces bears. Hence the story of the birth of earth mothers should come first in all tellings, not as now, how the bear was hunted by men; not how the woman was taken home again. To ignore Mother is to lack respect, something Bear warned against.

Only recently has Mother become the center of archaeomythological research. Gimbutas led to an explosion of new findings regarding past goddess cultures, especially in hybrid forms of the bear nurse and her milk. At Neolithic sites dating back to 7,000–6,000 BCE in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, researchers have found hundreds of clay figurines representing the bear, suggesting her as epiphanic of the ancient mother goddess.[51] (See Figs. 3.4 and 3.5.)

Figure 3.4 An alabaster bear mother pot from the Proto-Elamite culture of ancient Iran, ca. 3100–2900 BCE. Looked at one way, she's a pregnant woman; another, there's a bear cub in her belly.
Courtesy of the Met Museum, Rogers Fund, 1951.

Figure 3.5 Illustration of a goddess. Vitănești, Romania, ca. 4600–3900 BCE. From the exhibition *Goddesses and Warriors: 100 Years to Marija Gimbutas*, House of Histories, Vilnius, Lithuania.
Photograph by Kaarina Kailo, March 5, 2022.

Many of Gimbutas's figurines depict a bear-headed woman seated on a throne decorated with crescents. Some sculptures show the bear holding her left breast, emphasizing her role as breastfeeding mother. (See Fig. 3.6.)

Gimbutas thus called these terracotta bear sculptures "nurses" and believed that they were images of the goddess protecting the Divine Child, the newborn god of vegetation.[52] Bear mother figurines by far outweigh emblems of a "father." I suspect that the Finnish myth of a northern *Terra*

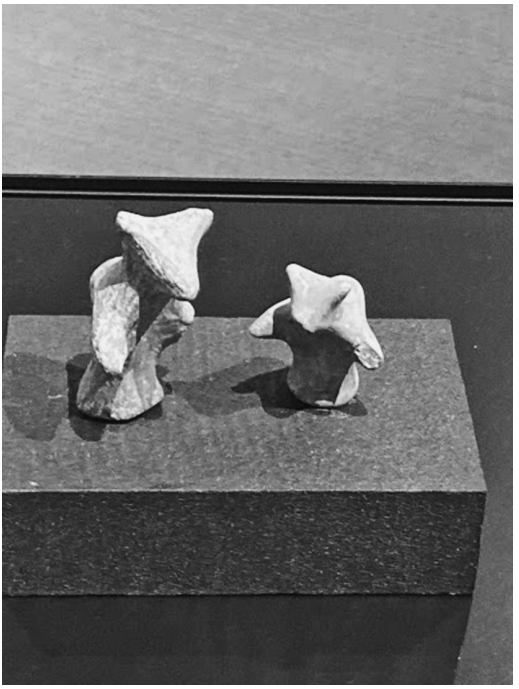

Figure 3.6 Clay figurines with bear heads. Jakovo Kormadin, Serbia, date unknown. From the exhibition *Goddesses and Warriors: 100 years to Marija Gimbutas*, House of Histories, Vilnius, Lithuania.
Photograph by Kaarina Kailo, March 5, 2022.

Feminarum and the Golden Woman, Zolataja Baba, shared a Great Mother of the North in localized manifestations.[53] The bronze casts made of her in Permia from the seventh and eighth centuries CE also combine the images of mothers, bears, and hibernating animals, among other themes.[54] Bear-woman love relationships are also recurrent themes in Greek and Roman mythologies.[55] (See Figs. 3.7–3.9.)

Traces of woman-and-bear narratives are necessarily evident in a life-celebrating socio-cosmic matrix that honors, especially, the icons of regeneration. Gimbutas well summed up the meaning of Bear woman as she reflected the gift imaginary. Bera was "Giver of Life, Wielder of Death," and "Regeneratrix," the "single source of all life" in "dynamic motion." Gimbutas included the old

Figure 3.7 A winged three-headed goddess, 7th–8th century CE. Discovered in 1911 in the village Ust Kalb, Russia. Local History Museum, Cherdyn, Perm Krai, Russia.
Photograph by Eero Peltonen. Used with permission.

color codes, too, claiming that far from death, black was the "color of fertility, the color of damp caves and rich soil, of the womb of the Goddess where life begins." By contrast, white was the "color of death, of bones."[56]

Prehistoric bears found their way into Celtic stories as well.[57] Six thousand years past, the forerunners of the Celts invented pre-Ogam, or the Old European Script. Found largely inscribed on clay vessels, the first Ogam-written sentence reads: "The Bear Goddess and the Bird Goddess are the Bear Goddess indeed." Bear and Bird having merged into a single deity, she later became the Greek goddess Artemis and the Celtic goddess Artio—from which we derive the word "art"—the Bear Goddess herself.[58] "Many-breasted" Artemis was always a patroness of fertility and birth.[59] Not just men, but women, too were hunters, so many bear goddesses are described

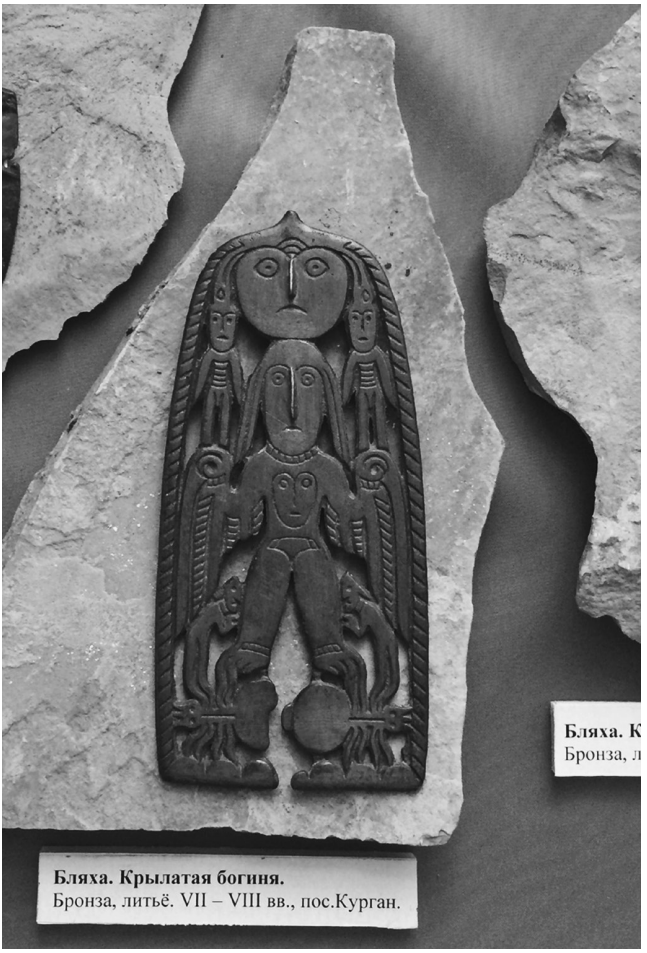

Figure 3.8 The Winged Woman, 7th–8th century CE. Discovered in 1957 in the village Kurgan, Russia. Local History Museum, Cherdyn, Perm Krai, Russia. Photograph by Eero Peltonen. Used with permission.

with their bows, ready to hunt. Similarly, the European Vinča culture, 9000–7000 BP, made "deity-like sculptures" of a "pregnant she-bear that could easily pass as a version of Artio," the Celtic version of the Bear Goddess.[60] (See Fig. 3.10.)

To reconstruct the matristic North in Scandinavia and Finland, one has to consider rock art and archaeological research, but so far I find it lacking in the methods that I deem so important. I have not found any archaeomythological

Figure 3.9 Another view of the Winged Woman.

Figure 3.10 Small terracotta figurines of bird goddesses. Mycenae, late Bronze Age. National Archaeological Museum of Athens.

Photograph by Zde. Use permitted under a CC BY-SA 3.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en).

Figure 3.11 Clay figurine of a goddess or bird-shaman, with the appearance of an owl. Jomala, Åland Islands, Finland, ca. 4000–2000 BCE. This approximately 5,000-year-old figurine of a human from Jomala may represent a shaman partly dressed as an animal.

Finnish Heritage Agency. Use permitted under a CC BY 4.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en).

or gender-sensitive analyses of the owl figurine in Figure 3.11, considered for all that as a female shaman of the Stone Age: is this not similar to the many Neolithic bird-faced figurines analyzed by Gimbutas, Van der Meer, and Haarmann and Marler, among others?

According to Nunez, my former colleague at the University of Oulu:

> A number of new figurine finds have been reported from Finland and other parts of northern Europe (Ayrapaa 1942; Edgren 1964, 1982; Miettinen 1965; Wyszomirska 1984). Anthropomorphic clay figurines are a common feature at Neolithic sites in southern Europe, but are practically absent from central Europe (Tringham 1971; Gimbutas 1974; Milisauskas 1978; Phillips 1980). Further north, however, they occur frequently again,

> forming a second figurine zone that extends from Scandinavia to the Urals. This northern zone is associated mainly with food-gathering cultures and it is characterized by both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines of diverse materials. Although anthropomorphic clay figurines occur throughout the zone, they are dominant only in mainland Finland and the Aland Islands (Table 1; Wyszomirska 1984).[61]

The best-known goddess figure from Pohjola is no doubt the Astuvansalmen Artemis, a mysterious bow-woman. At the Finnish rock art site Astuvansalmi, there are rock paintings estimated to be 4,200 to 6,000 years old. On the rock we can detect the famous figure named Astuvansalmi Artemis, a goddess painted in red and assumed to be a foremother. Her breasts are the proof that she is female, although this fact has been glided over by many scholars. As Tacitus among ancient historians has reported, women participated in hunting together with the men. There is no consensus on the "ethnicity," identity, or role of this figure in rock art. Francis Joy argues for its Sami cultural origin,[62] but due to its high age and the ambiguity of who originally inhabited the North, Finnish women relate to her also as a symbolic foremother. I have made a quilt art rendition of this figure in Figure 3.12.

In modern-day Bern, Switzerland, a goddess sculpture of a woman offering fruit to a bear carries the dedication, *Deae Artioni Licinia Sabinilla*, meaning, "For Goddess Artio, from Licinia Sabinilla." Another goddess, Andarta, or "Powerful Bear," shows the particle, "art," which turns up frequently in other Welsh and Irish god-names, including "Artgenos, Son of the Bear."[63] "As late as 1697," noted Annis Pratt in 1994, "Europeans were still writing accounts of real bears nursing human children."[64] (See Fig. 3.13.)

The old Irish celebrated the renewal of the fertile cycle of nature as part of the goddess Brigit's festival. In addition to fire and water, Brigit held poetry and smithing. Her cloak, "Brat Bhríde," can heal sickness or cause fertility when spread across Mother Earth.[65] (In Finland, Bear women like Mielikki or Hongatar likewise wear mantles that protect both animal and hunter.)[66] Brideóg, a doll made of straw, stood as her icon. It would be carried from house to house at festival time to honor Brigit.[67] Like so many others worldwide, the ancient Celts linked hibernation to seasons, shifts, and renewal. No one missed that Bear rose with the spring, marking the renewal of life. Séamas Ó Catháin sees the bear's rising from hibernation as the animating tradition of Brigit: "The animal was thus effectively cast in a similar role to

Figure 3.12 Goddess Figure from Pohjola. Quilt work based on rock art findings by Kaarina Kailo, 2020. Photograph by Arja and Alpo Huhmarniemi. Used with permission.

the Brigit who manifests herself in a parallel situation within the context of the festival held in her honour."[68]

Brideóg is not the only protective doll. In fact, she is probably a later permutation of "dolls." The many small figurines from the Paleolithic era are believed to be artifacts from home altars. I have wondered whether this practice might be behind the continued importance of protective dolls among many Finno-Ugric peoples. While some archaeologists thought that the Old European artifacts, figurines were mere toys, others have pointed out that

Figure 3.13 The goddess Artio from the Muri statuette group, a noted collection of Gallo-Roman bronze figures. Muri bei Bern, Switzerland, late 2nd century A.DCE. Historisches Museum Bern.

Photograph by Sandstein. Use permitted under a CC BY 3.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.en).

such a dismissal represents nothing so much as a retroactive projection of modern disbelief into the past. Even today, dolls are not just playthings for girls: Indigenous Finno-Ugric peoples still keep them in yurts as protectors, ancestral spirits.[69]

Mother worship also existed in Russia, bringing context to the Russian studies of Venus figurines in places like Mal'ta. Like the Celtic, Siberian goddesses connect with the elemental earth, fire, and water, as well as with persons of the human and animal variety. There are also water, forest, and mountain spirits. Not only does the Siberian Sangia Mama dominate among the Amur people of Central Asia, but she is also reflected in the Turkish Umai.[70] Meantime, the east Slavic fertility goddess, Kostroma, is neither dead nor alive, but deep in a slumber (say, like hibernation) from

which only her priestess may arouse her. When Kostroma cuts her braid, she is both hay in the field and the mower of field hay. She moves from parthenogenetic girlhood into marriage and motherhood. Thus, when (under the supervision of their mothers) girls married following the solstice harvest, they cut off their braids, in a symbolic teasing of their spouses to produce children.[71]

In Romania, she-bears are considered the largest person in the community, "a symbol of the community and culture," iconographic of loving motherhood."[72] It is worth knowing, then, that even today, Romania has the largest bear population in Europe at six thousand individuals.[73] The inhabitants have learned to respect bears and apparently live in relative harmony with them, although they have begun to seek food in the village garbage cans, and have come very close to human habitation.

What we are looking at in all these traditions are descendants of the ancient Earth Goddess. In her dissertation on the numerous cross-cultural stories of women and bears, Helga Reischl noted recurrent, interlocking variants of the bear-woman tale. She sees the cosmic interpretations of many tales enhanced by three recurrent motif associations. First, "Bear protects the Sun's House," taking or returning Sun to the world, or receiving "his power from the Sun." Second, ten percent of traditions link Woman to the sun in her "wanderings" and through red things worn. Finally, Bear may put "Woman in touch with something golden," either among the stars or, for Scandinavians, through "golden miniature tools of female creativity."[74] Indeed, Bear-Bera manifests as now a nymph, now a spirit of the land, the metaphorical Earth in spring and summer. Wearing a red skirt or sporting red hair, identified with the archaic fire, she enters the realm of winter in order to court Bear. After she manages to awaken Bear in the spring, they make love and bring forth all forms of life, including the first humans.[75] Is it a reversal of this plot in which Snow White and the Sleeping Beauty are fairy tales where it is now the hero, the prince, that wakens the women from their symbolic hibernation?

The earlier version echoes the Finnish and Norwegian versions of the Bear woman Beret, who likewise hibernates with Bear and then wakes him up.[76] In Finnish mythology, bear is protected by forest spirits-maidens with different names, Mielikki being the best known.

Many of the Finnish stories appear to be from the time when Bera's role is mostly to wake up her den-partner so he might be killed by the hunters. (See Fig. 3.14.)

Figure 3.14 The catch of numerous bears with those who felled them, date unknown.
Picture Collections of the Finnish Heritage Agency (Museovirasto). Used with permission.

Still, Finnish and Sami versions show an affectionate relationship between the woman and the bear that is not shared by the hunters. Carl-Martin Edsman contends that the Sami of Scandinavia believed that over the winter, presumably during hibernation, forest spirits fed the bear. This tale was afloat as late as the early eighteenth century, when the folk belief was that bears lived on the milk of Vitter-cows.[77] Again, we see the deliberate milk-feeding of bears as an echo of mother worship and the gift imaginary.

In one powerful story from the Sami, the ancestral bear Máddu is big, powerful, and clever—and may be either male or female. Luođuid Eadni is the mother of the wild, while the Green Daughter of the Forest Spirit is called Pynegusse in the Samoyed and Ruonánieida or Ránanieida in Sami (meaning Green Daughter or Girl). Originally, two bears married: Ihčče, the father Brown Bear, and Pynegusse, the Green Bear. The couple cared for the beings of the forest, who came to sleep away the winter in their cave. Then, when spring arrived, so did the first humans, as born to the loving couple. Then, more and more little humans were born, until all of a sudden,

bloody-minded strangers appeared, demanding bread. Ihčče gave them stones, instead, as they discovered upon returning to their father, Kristus, who had taught them to drink blood. Complaining that stones were not bread, the strangers returned to make war on the bears and their children, in a "terrible time for the children of Ihčče and Pynegusse." To escape the bloodshed, they crossed a "Big Sea," to sleep in the "Mountain of Dreams." Now, Green Daughter waits for Ihčče to awaken, gather up his scattered and broken children, and return to the safe forest.[78]

This version of Ihčče and Pynegusse differs in a significant way from the version originally recorded by Edsman.[79] His focus was on the marriage of the bear and the spirit of Earth, also called Ravna in Sami mythology. Edsman's story corresponds closely to what Reischl categorized as the Earth spirit or wilderness narrative, which is no doubt an echo of the bear religion, the first religious rituals in the Paleolithic era when the Great Mother with her various names was venerated and all blood was menstrual. It echoes the forest maiden of many Women Who Marry Bears—the girl who spends the winter in the bear's lair, often providing bear with nourishment. She represents the life force awakening in the spring. This girl is Bera, who survives in the bear's den all winter by sucking the bear's paws, often also feeding the bear during its hibernation fast.[80] I read this as an effect of the Original Instructions: human and nonhuman "people" nurture and nourish each other through a reciprocal, cosmic pact. Both thus survive. These powerful origin stories harken back to how a particular culture was born. To this day, the Skolt Sami perpetuate the story that they are the offspring of the Woman Who Married the Bear.[81]

In a certainly subsequent variant of this tale, we meet the hunters, whose intention is to eat the bear. However, a son of the bear overturns the boiling stew pot, when the hunters refuse to share the catch, allowing the cooking bear to tumble out, resuscitate, and run off into the forest. In another version, it is the bear's wife that revives her husband. She touches the stew pot, singing: "Arise, *sjeäle-ear*!" At that, the hunters become so fearful of what might occur that they give the woman her meat.[82] It seems odd that the exclusion of a woman—and wife, no less—from her husband's feast has not received comment. Perhaps this section conjures up a ritual of some sort, in which hunters are prodded to share the fruit of their hunt with women—*or else*. Alternatively, this might suggest that Bear, himself, condemns the fact that his spouse-in-the-den is not given her share. Then again, Bear Clans typically do not eat the meat of their animal ancestor, so having a share in such

a commemorative feast gives me the shudders: do I want to eat my dead husband? Well, no.

In a matricultural or matriarchal bear eucharist, the notion of sacrament would not feature a stew pot. It would highlight a nonexclusive feast or a healing drama, and any gifts shared would be a means of unifying all members of a group without the hierarchical binaries.[83] Instead of telling lies to the bear, such as that the hunters stewing the bear had not killed it, the bear would simply be honored for its gifts without misleading, self-serving stories scapegoating the participants' neighbors or enemies as having killed the bear.[84] Finns are reported to have said: "You, yourself, fell off the spruce / slipped from the bent bough yourself / pierced your berry-filled belly / shattered your golden maw."[85] It is important to figure out where these manipulations of the bear hunt story came from, when and why. Perhaps, when hunting arose, finagling replaced part of the Original Instructions for hunting. Blaming the "other" for one's misdeeds may be part of the shift in behavioral codes.

Hieros gamos (ἱερός γάμος), from the Greek, means "sacred marriage," and it refers to marriages between gods. I submit that it, too, comes from the Original Instructions, at least to the extent that it creates conditions for the collective well-being, prosperity, and luck that flow from communal initiation rites. It is a mistake to run immediately to visions or orgies around *hieros gamos*, as no actual intercourse need be implied (except in the reader's dirty mind).[86] (See Fig. 3.15.)

The *hieros gamos* of the Bear marriage does not represent in any simplistic way a bear-hug marriage of Woman and Bear but condenses such interpretative possibilities as the union of human and nonhuman, sky and earth. This is absolutely in line with the intent of the Original Instructions.

The Scandinavian Bera echoes Berchta or Perchta (alpine German) and Hulda (German), all earth goddesses of ancient matriarchal eras who had great shamanic powers, from affecting weather to partaking of the reproduction of life forms with Bear.[87] The woman-bear marriage formed a serious symbol announcing the kind of spirituality that results from respecting nature and treating it as a partner, as kin, rather than as a mere resource for human consumption and abuse. Changes to Bear marriage came gradually; hence, the current banquet is not any type of pure patriarchal drama. Tribes that incorporated bears into their initiation rituals probably did so because hibernation resembled a sleep-based initiation. *Hieros gamos* provides the key to the message of these tales and their fragments. A woman's marriage

Figure 3.15 Clay figurine of an interconnected couple depicting the ritual of "sacred marriage." Măgura Gumelnița, Oltenița, Romania, 4600–3900 BCE. From the exhibition *Goddesses and Warriors: 100 years to Marija Gimbutas*, House of Histories, Vilnius, Lithuania.
Photograph by Kaarina Kailo, April 2022.

to Bear might have likewise constituted a *hieros gamos* between Heaven and Earth, as is the case in some Eurasian plots.

The name of the Woman Who Marries the Bear through hibernation also cues the maternal imaginary of Scandinavia that stresses life-oriented values in terms of milk-giving by Bera-Beret. In northern Norway, there is a story about Bear-Beret who, when picking berries as a small child, is captured by a

bear. Throughout winter hibernation, Bera essentially nursed on "the bear's paw" to survive. Although the bear cub does not appear in this telling, in a local legend from Setesdalen in southern Norway, he comes into his own as "Bear-Hans." The cub of a prior mate, Bear-Hans releases himself and his mother from the cave, by pushing away the doorstone.[88] This theme recurs across the North and is widely known in the alpine regions of Southern Europe, and even in South America.[89]

In later versions, Bera must awaken the bear so that it may be hunted and killed. A far cry from a symbolizing human-animal interconnection, this duty has a purpose more profound than helping hunters locate the den to catch game. Of course, waking the bear is waking all of nature in the name of regeneration and rebirth, which does not comport with killing it. It is obvious that concepts at cross-purposes have here been grafted together. The melding probably happened at the same cultural transition point that the gentle interpretation of slumbering winter melting into spring gave way to the hard-eyed construal of bear-awakening as "black magic," and it seems to have coincided with the advent of hunting. The Nordic Bear Festival came to be about "ringing in" the bear, the easier to kill him. At that point, *Skogsra*, the woman of the forest, was prevented from rousing or warning Bear before hunters were upon him. In fact, she is in on the betrayal of bear, as the ritual has her bring him a bucket of blood instead of the usual honey, tipping him off to his imminent demise.[90] If the blood were originally menstrual, signifying life-giving abilities, it was now leaking from his veins, signifying only death, without the "resurrection" of a gentle awakening from hibernation.

The Bear marriage as cosmic oneness disintegrated into a story of the so-called bestial in us as vying with our humanity. This mutation of the tale may be why uncooperative Armenian women are described as "running away" with bears. In one such story, a couple strolling on Havlora Mount in Armenia rested by a cave, where a rock fell, crushing the young man. Crying inconsolably, the young woman found herself cradled by an empathetic bear, who spoke to her in Turkish, which she did not know, but she nevertheless understood what Bear told her. After burying the deceased youth, the woman and bear marry, having many offspring, who became the ancestors of the Zaza Kurds, through their "bear" father. Sima Aprahamian, who recorded this tale, sees Bear marriage traditions as "scripts" for women to "run away from constraints on desire."[91] Aprahamian further touched on color symbolism in this story, in which red as (menstrual) blood and green symbolize life.[92] Another interpretation is that patriarchal values crushed the

coochy-coos of courting, and Hope died as the young man took sex from the girl, killing romance in the service of procreation.

As patriarchy teeters today, I suggest that we stretch our vision back to deep antiquity. There, in the figurines of Anatolia (which includes Armenia), we see the strong position of the elderly women, who no doubt brought tidings of the Great Mothers of Grandmother culture.[93] Their message returns us to oneness symbolized by the navel, which bears also have. Ancient figurines include "deliberate and consistent marking of the navel," emphasizing the life-sourcing "motherline."[94] The fact that Armenian stories of women marrying bears have been censored by patriarchal religious forces or crammed into woman-quelling boxes attests to their former importance. This alone suggests that narratives and rituals other than the male slaying of bear were pivotal in ancient times but squelched by Christianization.

Looking instead at ancient cave art, we see that the earliest religion now knowable began in Bear's sanctuary, bear's cave, because it is there that we find the combined worship of fire, water, mother, and bear. The recurring references to water are worth scrutiny, for in the past, water was held to be where life began, even without male intervention.[95] Likewise, the maiden of springs was also the indwelling spirit of the healing wells, so it is not surprising that wells are part of the stories of the Woman Who Married the Bear.[96] It is believed that early humans did not understand the role of the father, something that almost certainly accounted for the high esteem that motherhood enjoyed in the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. In fact, I found out that many old sweat houses in Ireland are associated with Brigit, and that there are wells near them. The Celtic Brigit in her paradigms of natality is the life force in the wells, spilling out of mountains and hills, "the bubbling source of life itself coming out of her breast on the top of the mountain."[97]

The cave is an appropriate site for origin myths, for it is one of the earliest likely sites where babies were born, as it provided shelter. The fact that Finnish women gave birth in the sauna seems like a continuation of this safe-place birthing with warmth guaranteed by the stove or other sources of fire.[98] Even baby Jesus was born (and buried) in a cave.[99] The Celtic understanding was that all things are born in darkness, a concept eerily echoed in Genesis 1.1: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep." Cave as womb, water as amniotic fluid, fire as the heat of the womb are obviously concepts of long standing, with menstrual blood revered, its return anticipated.

As Alexander Marshack famously showed in 1991, those were not henscratchings on the Paleolithic Taï Plaque found in le Grotte de Thaïs in southern France. They were calendrical markings following women's menstrual cycles.[100] Marshack reasonably surmised that this marked the origin, or at least, first recording, of the goddess cults. The Taï Plaque dates to around 12,000 BP, when the Younger Dryas set in. Although there is a wealth of research on such ancient artifacts and symbols of matristic cultures found across the globe, they have only recently been recognized as womb-oriented and to date have not been linked with the Bear religion, but it is time that they were.[101] I claim that they are related to the matristic worship of life and, likely, the bear cult as the first form of spirituality, the first matrix of rituals of regeneration.

The distinction between humans and "wildlife" may now seem clear, but in Paleolithic days, not so much. Instead, the cave, the den, the womb were all part of the same paradigm of a sacred enclave from which life returned after death. (See Fig. 3.16.)

Figure 3.16 The felling of the bear. Laatokka Karelia, ca. 1930–39. A bear's den appears as a black hole in a forest clearing, surrounded by spruce trees; outside the den lies the slain bear. Museum of Northern Karelia, Finland.

Photograph by Eino Mäkinen. Use permitted under a CC BY-ND 4.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/).

In 1959, Arkadiĭ Anisimov held that a "maternal place of birth-giving" connected with the shamanic "world-tree, *turu*."[102] The distinction back then was who grew life inside their bodies (females of any species), and who resurrected from a long sleep imitating death (hibernators). Consequently, the first bear story, before humans inserted themselves, was probably about the Mother Bear who birthed cubs after magically awakening from the little death of hibernation. She was the first den mother, the first practitioner of Original Instructions.

The underworld where Bera (perhaps Mama Bear herself) slept with Papa Bear can be imagined as the hole under the tree of life, which is imagined also as the location of the dead, of the ancestors awaiting rebirth. Valery N. Chernetsov has demonstrated quite convincingly the matriarchal character of ancient clan structures among the Ob-Ugrians. It was clearly expressed in the images of the two female ancestors of the Por and Mos phratries (clan halves). Cosmically, one phratry was the ancestor of sky, and the other was her daughter, Mos; the Mos clan half gave birth to Por, Mother Earth.[103] Again, females are originators. Females birth the present.

Why else would Bear give his—or *her*—Original Instructions to Bera, a woman? Clearly, in the ancient world, women wielded considerable authority. In Finnish tales, the "spirit master" ensuring rebirth is not a master spirit or an "owner of bear," patriarchal ways of describing property relations, which should not be interpolated into the ancient spirit worldview.[104] Instead, fictive kin who take care of the world held sway. Hongatar is the mother of the pine tree, and it is to the branches of her tree of life that the bear skull is returned for rebirth. Bear goddesses of high antiquity are grandmothers, ancestral forebears, and definitely not to be labeled simplistically as "wives" of forest kings, as they tend to be described.[105] The Sami have strict rules about burying the bear's bones without breaking any of them, thus allowing it to be returned to life.[106] The steps from hibernation to reincarnation are neither big nor widely spaced.

In cross-cultural mythology, we find among the primal bear goddesses several figures that associate both with bear and with the life-death-life cycle. In Ireland, for instance, we find the Old Hag Cailleach, who seems like a mythic kin of the Finnish Louhi, but patriarchal influence has since reduced most of these deities to symbols of death, linking the seasons with aging, from youth to old age. The winter goddess or crone fell at harvest into her realm in the inner depth of mountains and caves, in Finnish mythology called Pohjola's Stone or Copper Mountain.[107] The Finnish matriarch who not only gave

birth to bear but also occupied the insides of the mysterious mountain, Louhi embodies the ferocious, ursine side of Nature. She sends bears to wreak havoc in the Land of Heroes, Kalevala, and can shape-shift into an eagle.[108] She is the representation of the winter, from which the luminaries must be freed so spring returns and bears can wake up. Once more, this last twist does not comport with the patriarchal overlay of death, so we can see the core story peeking through the contradictions.

In Central Europe *Holla*, the name of the goddess, and *Höhle*, the name for "cave," are related. *Hell* in its present meaning results from the twists to meaning courtesy of Christian missionaries. To Holla, as the Mother of the Dead, sacrifices were made in the form of baking a bread called *Hollenzopf*, "Holla's braid," at Christmas time. *Holler*, *Hollander*, the "elder tree" was the sacred tree of the goddess beneath which lived the dead, who were probably seen as hibernating in the original version. Very similar ideas show up in the Baltic Ragana, Russian Baba Yaga, Polish Jedza, Serbian Mora, Morava, Basque Mari, and Irish Morrigan.[109] Among the Sami, we find the goddess Áhcešeatni in the realm of wintertime, goddess of cold arctic nights, the shadow side of the mountains, now black magic, and protector of wild reindeer. She has a flip side, however, as the sun goddess Njávešeatni, taking care of birth partially by guarding bees, butterflies, and other pollinating insects that help maintain the balance of life forms. She, too, protects the reindeer. It is probably not surprising, then, that according to one myth, as ancestor to her people, Áhcešeatni married the bear, while Njávešeatni married the reindeer. The bear and the reindeer appear in the shaman drums in a celestial hunting scene. Dressed as a hunter, bear is chasing reindeer, who represents our sun in the Milky Way.[110] In this, I see the original interpretation of sleeping through winter to rise again, as nature on earth was reflected as nature in the sky.

Studies of women's dance rituals and the spring rites in Scandinavia and the other northern countries likewise help reconstruct a world that included the feminine divine. Dancing was one common way of raising one's power in a ritualistic act to enhance nature's fertility.[111] In Norse sagas and in Ob-Ugrian myths of the Golden Woman, we find a theme of something simultaneously killed / not killed, which hammers home the idea that, depending on the culture, the goddess or the Great Ma cannot be destroyed. Freya and Gullveig return to life and Zolataja Baba is moved further and further away from those who try to steal and destroy her in her various manifestations as a statue, treasure trove, or goddess.[112] (See Figure 3.7.)

This is the woman-oriented theme of rebirth, the goddess as the indestructible life principle, despite all the patriarchal wars and hunting expeditions.

The small town of Bern, Switzerland, has a bear as its symbol. In fact, "Bern" *means* bear, and Bern's museum, located where Bear's shrine once stood, hosts the bear goddess Artio, likely the deity animating European continental Celts as well.[113] As a goddess of wildlife and fertility, she is closely associated with the bear. Interestingly, Artio transmuted from a "pagan" bear goddess into the holy Christian saint Ursula, a name cribbing the Saxon Ursel, "She-Bear." "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" was common missionary maxim, so it is unsurprising that in Cologne, Urcel also became "St. Ursula."[114] Ursel/Urcel is probably a Saxon variation on the Celtic Artio worshiped at Bern, with both analogous to the she-bear worshiped as Artemis, the mother of the animals.[115]

Ursel primed the Christian pump not a little because bear was the goddess "of vegetation who suffers, dies, and is reborn." European alpine bear carnivals as well as Romanian bear festivals are clearly leftovers of both mother and bear cults, the spring rituals of rebirth, carrying traces about the ancient women's coming-of-age rituals in the Greek *Arkteia*. Although Christian-flavored, similar, clearly bear-related rites survive in Crete at Acrotiri near Kydonia. There, it was Artemis or Demeter who married the bear.[116] In later times, "brides of the bear" mysteriously turned into "brides of Christ."

In Finland it is the Helka festival that most clearly echoes the Greek coming-of-age ritual in Ritvala.[117] In Ritvala's Helka, people jump over fire (in the belly of birth) in the name of purification to promote Nature's growth cycles. Helka is the Mother of the Luonnotar Spirits of Nature, and the ritual connects with prophecy, as in the case of the Permian and Ob-Ugrian Golden Woman, also betimes a hybrid woman-bear.[118] (See Fig. 3.17.)

If people give up the ritual, it is said, the world will come to an end. Will the fertility of Nature be destroyed? Are birds disappearing? Are the bees dying due to pesticides and radiation? How right our forebears have been!

The pattern of social withdrawal, seclusion, and return can take many forms in origin myths and initiation rites, but the context of Bera has been mangled over time. In the case of the Bear son John, the particular shamanic and woman-specific withdrawal into the den is no longer even mentioned. Instead, the story centers on the initiation of the hero into manhood, leaving skillful hunting and motherhood biting the dust. According to Edsman, the Swedish and Finnish tales representing woman's winter sojourn with the bear

Figure 3.17 Women in national costumes dancing at the Ritvala Helka Festival in Sääksmäki, Finland, July 13, 1945. People have since time immemorial held a particular Helka celebration in the village of Ritvala. The event is based on spring and fertility rituals (common to many cultures) that predated Christianity. The rituals were transformed subsequent to the spring blessing of fields. Ethnographic Picture Collection.

Photograph by Matti Poutvaara. Use permitted under a CC BY 4.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

as an ordeal must be characterized as a secondary overlay, for having lost their original framework of a man out bear-hunting. To acquire the bear's nature and thus become an outstanding bear-hunter, the initiate now has to observe a whole series of taboos associated with his bear relatives.[119] I believe that the matristic bond between bears and women came first, not the bear hunt. Women obviously had counterpart rites at one time, of which the Bear marriage is the classic. The cave almost certainly connects with the ancient menstruation hut in which girls transmuted through blood-power into "women." After all, "becoming bear" was code in many culture for either the first menses or pregnancy.[120]

The Bear-Beret story retains vestiges of the original construction of milk and—yes—blood.[121] Nothing could be more obvious than the connection between fertile mothers and milk, so that it is not too hard to understand why

the abbess of Kildare, successor to Brigit, could drink only the milk of a white cow or why the milk was seen as an antidote to weaponry.[122] If Bear-Beret's milk is no mystery, neither is the original meaning of blood, not as the death it became with hunting and then war, but as the life's blood of menstruation. We also know from multifarious research on the origins of rituals that when women bleed and put their blood on the earth, they act as a conduit between the generative forces of the moon and the receptive fertile energies of the earth. In some dialects of Sámigiella the same word is used for "power, sacredness, and honor," the red sap of alders, and—*ta da!*—menstrual blood. Sami women made offerings from their menstrual blood particularly to the Akka goddesses, who oversee "fertility, childbirth, and the protection of children." Menstrual blood also kept the potency of the goddesses in the ritual drum.[123] There seems to be a magic quality to anything that comes first, the first ancestor, the first fruit, the first kill, the first ritual—and the first blood of an adolescent girl, either in menstruation or the rupture of the hymen. Women's menstrual gifts to Mother Earth are believed to be this first ritual.[124] Menstrual blood and honey were considered exchangeable in Greek culture (hence, the "honeymoon"), leaving us with a new understanding of what Melissa was doing with her bees and why Aphrodite kept a supply of honey on hand.[125] In the cosmic tree, we also have another paradigm of blood as the life juice, the sap, which represents for many cultures the blood vessels of the microcosm. (See Fig. 3.18.)

Besides dramatizing the life-giving descent to the underworld (bear's lair, the womb), the Woman Who Married the Bear also gives birth. In this connection, it is worth referring to the Sami deities of birth, Máttáráhkká, the Ancestral Mother, and her three daughters, who may well signify the very foundation of the Sami cosmic order, although Western ethnographic literature has since focused more on the male than the female deities. They were, however, deities of new life, conveying the soul or spirit of a child, creating its body, and also assisting with menstruation, childbirth, and the subsequent protection of children. Máttáráhkká and her daughters thus personify the generative forces of the world: procreation, birth-giving, and life-sustaining. Behind the worship of women's ability to give birth and of nature's power of regeneration was a respect for the mystery of life, death, and rebirth. Women were revered not as mere mothers, but rather as powerful beings who could transform death into life by virtue of their capacity for rebirthing that life.[126]

Traveling back to the Neolithic period, we find evidence for a religion centered on a matrifocal society in Old Europe as recently as 6,500–3,500 BCE.[127] The goddess is a collective, "the Goddess-Creatrix in her many

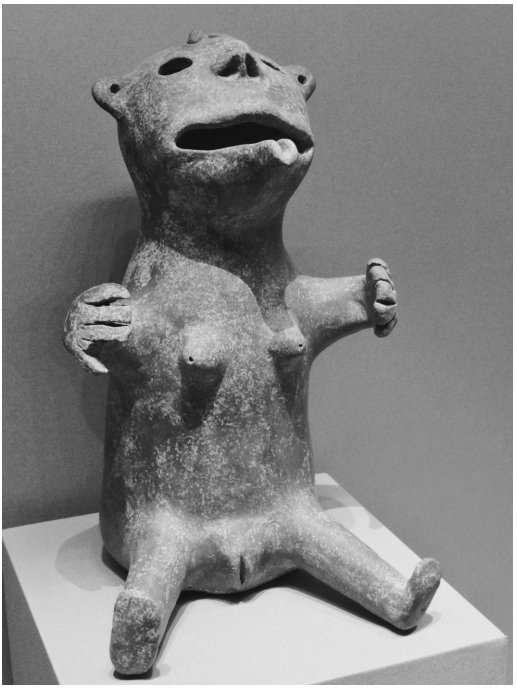

Figure 3.18 A ceramic bear-woman vessel, Marlik, northwest Iran, ca. 1200–1000 BCE. Cleveland Museum of Art.
Photograph by Daderot. Public domain.

aspects," among which the most important is the "life-giving goddess, her legs widely parted."[128]

The schematic diagram for this birth-giving goddess was widespread across Old Europe, and reliefs of this open-legged goddess found in the temples of the Anatolian village of Çatal Hüyük have become especially well known.[129] Such sanctuaries were common in Çatal Hüyük for at least a millennium, while the image of a woman with her legs apart has been found above entrances to caves and sauna-type constructions.[130]

The feminine divine thus welcomed the people wishing to experience healing and maybe rebirth, and the image served to shift the attention of men from war to sex. Contemporary interpreters of this culture have suggested that one may contemplate the impact of entering a religious sanctuary and finding the large, central, elevated image of the Great Birth-Giver with widely parted legs.[131]

I have more than a hunch that, over time with patriarchalization, female processes were ascribed a very different symbolic valence from those in the eras

Figure 3.19 Icons of apocryphal saints, which appear often above the entrance to sweathouses or sanctuaries.
Apocryphal saints © 2005 Max Dashu.

of bear, birth, and rebirth. In our age of overpopulation and the decreasing value seemingly placed on human life, it is easy overlook the fact that without women, there is no population; that without healthy birth, there is no continuation. Instead of the simplistic assumption that birth is merely biological, then, we must realize that in Paleolithic days, the mysteries of conception and childbirth were cosmic. This is why they became the very stuff of ritual observance, with conception, birth, motherhood, and protection found in all of these traditions. It is why "rebirth" is a term used for religious conversion to this day.[132] Possibly the notion of a "virgin birth" originated in times before the role of semen was comprehended. After all, the child did not appear until nine months later, and the connection between intercourse and childbirth is not necessarily obvious, leaving people grasping at starry intervention for an explanation.

Just as important as conception and birth was safety during gestation, childbirth, and nursing, times when Mother is fully occupied with things other than mastodons. We should also consider the protection offered by the Bear husband, who, upon his demise, gives his strong nature to her as protector. After all, the original story, as much as we can piece it together,

emphasized that Bear took care of his wife. Importantly in this regard, Bear could move between death and life, while living permanently in a womb (cave). This might well have been a set of instructions for men not to fear death in furtherance of women's and children's lives.

In this regard, Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders analyze etymologies speaking of the bear's relationship with various Indo-European root words. For instance, *behr* is connected to words meaning "to carry" in the sense of giving birth, including "beran." It can also be "bier," the frame supporting a coffin. The Old English *beorcan* means "growl" and can connect to the sounds of grief. *Bhregh* relates to the root for "to hide" or "to protect" as well as to "byrgan," to bury. Meanwhile, there is *berg*, which continues to mean hill, as in the place where the caves are. As for *burlic*, it means "exalted" or "borne up."[133] We know that the bear is widely associated with a holy mountain in myth as well as revered as Ursa Major, a constellation in the night sky, commonly called the "Big Dipper."[134] (See Fig. 3.20.)

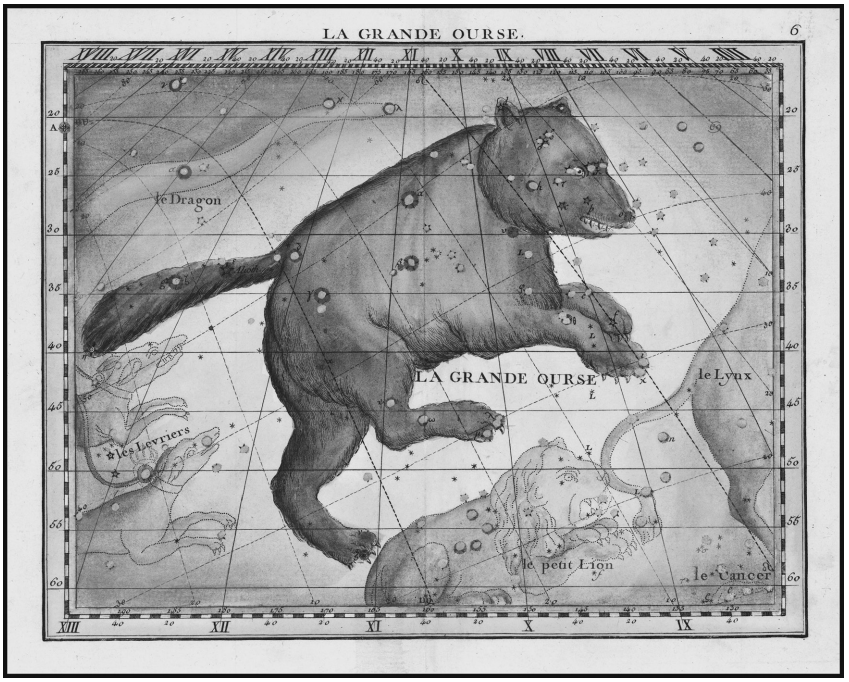

Figure 3.20 Illustration of the Great Bear, or Grande Ourse (Ursa Major), by John Flamsteed (1646–1719).
Public domain.

The same applies for the northern goddess Zolataja Baba, whose origins seem to be the seven menhir-like stone babas (*kamennaja baba*) on mountain tops in the Ural Mountains.[135] (See Figs. 3.21–3.23.)

Moreover, pregnancy and childbirth repeat bear hibernation patterns of "withdrawal, seclusion, and return," patterns that ceremony around the Great Mother repeat.[136] Isolation recurs in many stories and rituals around women as bears. That women in Latvia and Lithuania are called " 'Bear' immediately after giving birth" suggests that birth mothers are seen as divine life-givers in the likeness of bears, like the divine Bear of archaic times.[137] In Judaism, too, *Shekinah*, שכינה, the "Glory of God," is a woman, who in Talmudic lore embodies holy powers characterized as "hidden." It is thought that *Shekinah* was connected with *Asherah*, the Canaanite "Great Lady."[138] Rita Gross argues that one of the most reliable generalizations that can be made about childbirth seclusion in primal religions is the absence of men.[139] The pervasiveness of childbirth seclusion could mean that the bear ceremonial hunter's ritual is a consolation prize, a counterpart of women-only birthing events harking back to divine life-givers in the likeness of bears in archaic times.

Figure 3.21 Illustration of the Golden Woman, Slata baba, on the northeast corner of a map of Russia (Moscovia) published by Sigismund von Herberstein, 1549.

Source: The Barry Lawrence Ruderman Map Collection, Stanford University. Use permitted under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/).

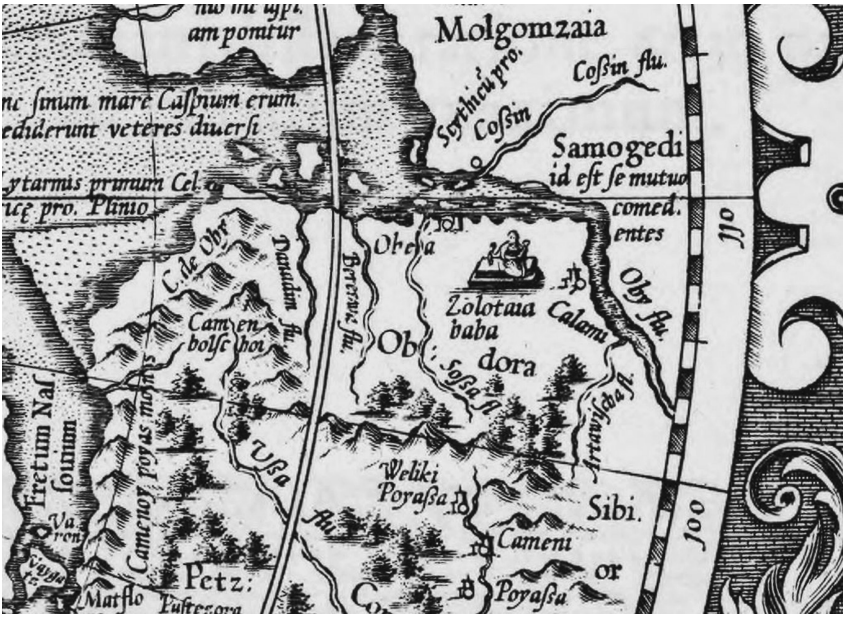

Figure 3.22 Fragment of a world map by Gerhard Mercator, where a statue of a woman with a child in her arms and the name "Zolotaia baba" is depicted near the mouth of the Ob River, 1595.

Source: Darlington Digital Library, University of Pittsburgh. Public domain.

Figure 3.23 Zlata baba portrayed in an engraving from the "World Cosmography" by André Thevet, Paris, 1575.

Source: Mercedes Pullman, "Zolotaya Baba: El ídolo dorado de Altái," *Revista de Antropología y Tradiciones Populares* 7 (2020): 14–19.

I find it likely, therefore, that the exclusion of the woman from many aspects of Finno-Ugric bear ceremonials relates to the fact that woman once had her own male-forbidden rituals surrounding the menses and childbirth. The situation might be analogous to Indigenous American women not sitting on the drum, because it was originally given to the men by the women, specifically to allow them to make a heartbeat below their own heart, just as women could.[140] If so, then the exclusion of women from male rites is no more disrespectful than the exclusion of men from women's rituals. In fact, leaving one another alone, without supervision, is the height of respect and trust.

When the new mother approached the sauna for a ritual bath some weeks following childbirth, the women preparing the ritual would call out, "The Bear is coming; the Bear is coming," suggesting a remnant of an archaic ritual formula.[141] At least in Eastern Europe, a ceremonial bath facilitates the mother's return from Bearness, which had taken her outside the human community. It is perhaps not accidental that the Jewish Mikvah is required for purification after menstruation, as another echo of Bearness, as is female bathing in conjunction with childbirth. Evidence of mothers' postpartum Bear bathing exists on Crete, specifically, at the Bear Cave of Akrotiri. Judging by offerings found in the cave, it was the site of an Artemis Kourotropos (the Nursing Artemis) from the classical through the Roman ages. In the sixteenth century CE, the cave became a place of veneration of Panagia Arkoudiotissa of the "Virgin Mary of the Bear," whose festival is celebrated in the cave of Acrotiri in western Crete, on February 2.[142] Her title is suggestive of a child-Bear-ing Madonna.

In fact, Bear features as a trope of birthing women and fecundity throughout Eastern Europe. The timing of the spring festival, Candlemas, likewise unifies the bear stories across the world, renewing and awakening life, as symbolized by Bear. The Irish feast of purification is Imbolc, occurring on February 1. Women who repeatedly give birth to twins are said eventually to turn into bears and walk off into the mountains.[143] A spring-and-birthing festival, it celebrates the lactation of the ewes, with milk poured as an offering on the ground.[144] Practically all Ob-Ugrian of the Por-group celebrate their origin in bear feast songs, when Bear calls his mother, Mos'-woman.[145] Perhaps such tales are not unconnected with the popular Norse story, still alive and well in 1908, that Finns and Lapps could turn into bears at will.[146] The Skolt Sami have been renowned for their ability to transform into bears, an ability they would use either to acquire food—or to escape military service for non-Sami rulers.[147]

Themes abound of a woman's giving birth to hairy twins, growing fur, and turning into a bear to leave the human world. They serve as an explanatory matrix for multiple situations requiring comprehension of the mystical importance of bears as cosmic, even erotic, protagonists in young girls' initiations. This knowledge has helped me make sense of a Finnish spring rite of May, in which young girls make a procession with two goals: waking up nature's powers of fertility and, simultaneously, presenting an occasion for matchmaking with boys.[148]

Clearly, something happened between the Paleolithic and Bronze Age, a cultural switch that moved the long-standing focus from Mother to Father. Some of the fiddling is recent, read into the record by nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western scholars intent on reading the tenets of their own patriarchal culture into ancient societies, imposing male formations where they might well not have belonged. In 2005, Barbara Tedlock noted the extent to which male scholars simply projected their gender bias onto all important social positions. For example, they assumed, first, that men did all the hunting and, second, that language developed as a direct result of male hunters calling out to one another.[149] This strikes me as silly, the self-aggrandizing proposition of those who never nursed an infant or tried to corral a bevy of determined toddlers. Speech developed *there*.[150]

To assume that all spiritual leaders and "gods" were male is another reflection of the Western skew. For instance, almost all those mighty-hunter handprints on Paleolithic cave walls turned out to be stencils of women's hands.[151] The clear reason is the bear-cave/woman-womb connection. Becoming bear, as women are wont to do, is a common shape-shifting act linked to bear spirituality. It had different meanings in different periods. In the early stages, it likely referred to trance-travel, whereby female shamans might seek advice from ancestral spirits or shamanic helpers.[152] Trances were almost certainly induced, as they are today, through decoctions and concoctions of herbs, roots, and leaves, for after all, both women and bears were the first shamans who knew the skills of collecting herbs and healing. This may explain why there remain depictions of a Golden Woman who had two bear feet.[153] (See Figs. 3.24–3.25.)

Shape-shifting is a common theme of the Woman Who Married the Bear, and the Sami remind us that some women actually do become bears, that is, they change their consciousness to listen with the third ear, as Theodor Reik put it, to hear the invisible.[154] Some researchers call Siberian mysticism "arctic hysteria" and view it as a "culture-bound" psychiatric disorder, but

Figure 3.24 The trinity of goddess, bear, and bird. Okunevo, Russia, 7th century CE. The sacred woman, or goddess, the bear, and the bird are key symbols in Palaeo-Siberian imagery. All three constituents form a harmonic unity in the same archetypical context.

Source: Joan Marler and Harald Haarman. "The Goddess and the Bear: Hybrid Imagery and Symbolism at Çatalhöyük," *Journal of Archaeomythology* 3, no. 1 (2007): 48–79. Used with permission.

I prefer to call it arctic mysteria, and see nothing insane about it.[155] Especially in more recent times, female shamans of the Arctic deal with difficult situations in which they are no longer recognized as healers and shamans. They are nevertheless contacting the extraordinary in ways of being that grasp cosmic connections, the "Oh!" beyond "memory and desire."[156]

In the fairly recent, that is, patriarchal variants, however, we may suspect instructions for "appropriate" gender behavior and patriarchally colored notions of socialization and rules of conduct, while blaming women for being bad guardians of a nation's morale. I suspect that women who met with unfair treatment, whether in full-blown or in in-process patriarchies, found ways to escape their constraints or created stories as a means of fantasizing their escape. The custom of "abducting" women continues in Finland as part

Figure 3.25 Sculpture representing the Mistress of Nature with zoomorphic features, Perm, Russia, 7th–8th century CE.

Source: Joan Marler and Harald Haarman. "The Goddess and the Bear: Hybrid Imagery and Symbolism at Çatalhöyük," *Journal of Archaeomythology* 3, no. 1 (2007): 48–79. Used with permission.

of wedding celebrations—and is considered a humorous incident, done as a play. While many women go along with this "joke," I refused it at my wedding with my husband (who was not a real bear—but who knows, as he is now in the spirit world).

Perhaps the perversion of women's power into women-blaming reflects a distortion of shamanism as it linked with ancestor worship. Forebears had the role of keeping order, watching out for morality, and ensuring that a culture's Original Instructions were respected. The spirit world is the stomping grounds of bears, after all, the place where "spirits which reign at home and in nature" are the "source of order." The ancestors live in the bear's "house," which includes the sauna, as well as anywhere animals and humans share space. The "first owner" or the "builder" of that house and familial tradition is thus intimately connected with Bear.[157] The point is to strengthen

bonds within the familial group. Toward this end, we Finns would throw *löyly*, the spirit-steam, on the rocks in the sauna to remember our ancestral spirits and relatives that had passed away.[158] People no longer throw löyly to those who have passed away, at least not as part of mainstream culture. *Löyly* vapors were considered spiritual in essence by our ancestors, but this was the custom still in use during the nineteenth century. The spirits of the sauna were thanked and greeted, and food as well as drinks were left for them.

Because the sauna and the bear's den have the same conceptual meaning as spaces of renewal, healing, and rebirth, it was believed that ancestors visited them. I remember my own grandfather teaching us that there was a skeleton seat in the sauna, in the darkest corner that we children all came to fear while still wanting to sit there. People no longer throw *löyly*, those vapors considered spiritual in essence by our ancestors, but this was the custom still in use during the nineteenth century. Personally, I still engage in it, as a bear woman.

Certainly, traces of bear worshiping as associated with women abounded in Paleolithic eras, from Belgium to Finland, from Celtic to Sami cultures even though many studies fail to comment on them explicitly.[159] If in earlier days, women were highly appreciated as the first shamans and healers, then under the influence of colonialism and its interpolation of patriarchal values, woman-blaming resulted from the devaluation of matristic power. Stories of women's sacred relationship with bears, caves, and human continuation were reinterpreted negatively so that, for instance, in far-eastern Siberia, the Yakuts and the Nivkh claim that simply having dream contact with spirit bears can lead to death after childbirth. Women's mysticism now leads nowhere respectable. This is the sort of effect that results from "malestream research," and it behooves us to speculate on whence it came and why we still put up with it.

To return to where I began in this chapter, cultural history, archaeology, and anthropology are not confined to physical finds but include an inquiry into their mentifacts, "all the ideas, social patterns and cultural traditions" that communities once honored as "valid and valued."[160] Although Harald Haarmann and Joan Marler spoke particularly of the finds at Çatalhöyük, their analysis of bear-woman conflations apply across the Eurasian continent as well as across the Paleolithic period in the mentifacts that have been turned up by so many researchers. The union of woman and bear was a "mythic hybridization," in which it was not unusual for the woman to "take on bear-like

features including fangs and claws," becoming "the one who determined the end of life as well as its renewal."[161]

The figurines that have been scattered across the Eurasian land mass come alive through the story of the Woman Who Married the Bear. They allow us not only to locate the cross-cultural bear lore supporting archaeomythological findings about Earth and Birth goddesses, but also to reconstruct motherhood as a cultural model of values, not just as a biological process. It was a specific of the gift imaginary rooted in female subjectivity and symbolism that patriarchy has not succeeded in wiping out. Like the young girls dancing at Brauron and Munychia *as* bears, the cub gamboled in the cave, like a fetus in the womb. Like the Woman Who Married the Bear, the Bear mother protected her cubs, tooth and claw, even if her husband died in the process.

4

First Beings

A Historical Shift and the Mother behind It All

by Kaarina Kailo

The archaeomythological research initiated by Marija Gimbutas has led to an explosion of new findings regarding goddess cultures of the past and, pertinent to this book, hybrid forms of the bear nurse and the Great Goddess who feature prominently in her findings. Traces of the Woman Who Married the Bear are evident in the life-celebrating, socio-cosmic matrix that honors especially the icons of regeneration. These include mothers, bears, caves, and even hedgehogs (little hibernators). All are creatures we find in the three-layered shamanic world of the global North, with birds on top (in the air), the hibernating creepy-crawlies next (on the ground), and bears (in the underworld beneath the tree of life). This tripartite structure is found across Eurasia.

Birdland was closely associated with the sun disk, with anything golden, so that many peoples worshiped the sun goddess as the life-giver. As we saw earlier, one of the Germanic Perchta's names is Holle (Holda, Hulda, Hulle, Frau Holl), and she is a winter goddess.[1] As a "Goddess of Earth," she was half white and half black, alluding to the ancient Eurasian color code featuring the white of death and the black of earth.[2] Her name equates with her "shining robes," hence her later association with the Christian Epiphany, the "Shining Night" on which the star of Bethlehem shone down.[3] Holle is also connected with Baba Yaga, now transformed into an ogress of Slavic tales, with a reputation for eating children. Both Holle and Baba Yaga have affinities with the Finnish Akka, she of the Golden Buckets—or rather, breasts the size of buckets.[4] The ancient Nabatæan people worshiped the Mother Goddess, Allat (al-alat);[5] in Anatolia, Turkey, the Hittite sun goddess Arinna;[6] in Celtic Europe, the goddess Epone (Epona);[7] and in Scandinavia, the goddess Nerthus.[8] Many statues of heroic men conceal references to the power of the goddess, although few recognize this. (See Figs. 4.1a,b–4.2a,b.)

The Woman Who Married the Bear. Barbara Alice Mann and Kaarina Kailo, Oxford University Press.
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(a)

(b)

Figure 4.1a and b Statue dedicated to the Finnish-Swedish author, national poet, and priest Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–77), designed and sculpted by his son Walter Runeberg (1838–1920). The statue is located in the Esplanadi park in Helsinki (4.1a). By the foot of the pedestal there is a young woman wrapped in bearskin, symbolizing the Maiden of Finland (4.1b). She is holding a laurel wreath and an inscription with the words of three verses of the Finnish national anthem.

Figure 4.1a: Use permitted under a CC0 1.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en). Figure 4.1b: Photograph by Kaarina Kailo, 2022.

(a)

(b)

Figure 4.2a and b The statue of the Grand Duke of Finland, Alexander II, in Senate Square, Helsinki, is surrounded by female figures, one of which echoes the Bear woman story. The pedestal has a total of eight human and animal figures (4.2a). On the southern edge of the pedestal is Law (Latin: *Lex*), the goddess of justice with her lions, holding a sword and a shield (4.2b). The role of the woman as icon of the gift imaginary becomes a part of the juridical imaginary. Created by artists Johannes Takanen and Walter Runeberg, April 1894.

Figure 4.2a: Photograph by Kaarina Kailo. Figure 4.2b: Leopold Henrik Stanislaus Mechelin, *Finland in the Nineteenth Century by Finnish Authors: Illustrated by Finnish Artists* (Helsingfors: F. Tilgmann, 1894), 165. Public domain.

Together with Epone, Holle is often shown carrying the sun disk in her arms as she rides a white shamanic horse, which might well be represented in the iconic, 360-foot-long White Horse intaglio at Uffington, southern England.[9] We are talking a paradigm of light and resurrection, which further includes the sun goddess Amaterasu of Japan, who established the imperial line in 660 CE;[10] the Maltese Ma Lata;[11] and the Finnish luminary goddesses Päivätär and Kuutar.[12]

There is literally no way to escape notice of the many-faceted, life-giving goddess—leading us to ask just how she has gone missed for so long. Until the Bronze Age, the male is barely depicted, and when he is, it is allusionally, occurring mostly in the form of beards, phalluses, or animal symbols, perhaps giving a new insight into why the female Egyptian pharaoh Hatshetsup portrayed herself as having a beard. If traditional Western archaeology sagely assured us all that it was Hatshetsup's gamine nature, that she was masculinized in traits and personality, then more recently, it turns out to be because she was an early transgender figure.[13] Both assertions are perspectives heavily skewed by Western expectations to ignore both the known symbolism of allusional artifacts and the Indigenous gender customs practiced in parts of Africa to this day.[14] It is really more likely that Hatshetsup wore a beard because she filled a *job* that was gendered, so that Hatshetsup's female *biology* was beside the point.[15] For cultures in which the mother is central, binary biological gender is an afterthought, not a fate. The fluidity of spirits shows that deities were not ordered in a hierarchical two-step, as in Western heterosexualized systems, but coalesced around matriarchal values of community obligation, collaboration with the ancestors, and respect for natural life in all its dimensions.

I think the key to understanding the misunderstanding of antiquity is the "Bronze Age," which started around 5300 BP. The darling of Western lore for the last few hundred years, we hear of the invention of bronze tools and, importantly, weaponry, as the beginning of citified "civilization," which we are assured arose in the Middle East. The Bronze Age arouses Western emotional attachment because it features men in all the leading roles. The insistence on the Bronze Age as the inception of "civilization" is, however, greatly weakened by such discoveries as that of Göbekli Tepe, a site at Şanliurfa in southeastern Anatolia, Turkey, a highly organized "Stone Age" site reaching back to 12,000 BP, the period of the Younger Dryas.[16]

For raiding cultures such as those of the Bronze Age to succeed, there must first be hierarchical organization—such as had to have been operative

at Göbekli Tepe. One of the most stunning facts of Göbekli Tepe is that it was buried, erased entirely from sight. Originally, it was postulated that the site had been deliberately covered up in some sort of "ritually charged" act, but lately, archaeologists have hypothesized that the buildings collapsed for some reason, causing an "inundation" of debris.[17] The area is an earthquake-prone area, and, as we know from the tumbling walls at Jericho (Joshua 6:20), such events were interpreted as the supernatural taking sides. If cosmic power disliked the old ways that much, perhaps it was seen as a sign to change those ways.

Hierarchical organization might even have originated in an attempt to regain a beloved thing lost to the changing ecosystem. For instance, when the seas rose with ice melt around the Bay of Firth, off the mainland of Orkney in the far north of Scotland, they submerged a natural stone feature bearing a striking resemblance to Stonehenge. During a heritage site survey of the area, archaeologists Richard Bates and Caroline Wickham-Jones noticed the semblance on their sonar scan, with Wickham-Jones later dubbing the site "the Motherhenge."[18] Mother Earth had created the original, but it drowned in the rising sea—imagery rife with implications for fertility gone berserk as wild waters killed off important things. It looks as though people were unready to give up on the old ways, however, as human effort sought to replace the submerged site. Given the mystical connection between water, amniotic fluid, and birth, it is possible that the flooding that ended the Young Dryas was at hand and taken as a sign that women's power had run its course.[19]

Something important was happening, and it was now being explained by a patriarchal script that is only being questioned today. Why have Western histories fawned over raiding cultures as "civilized" while ignoring prey cultures as "primitive," that is, as getting what they deserved? To this day, scholars extol the exploits of ancient invaders—the Hyksos, Libyans, Assyrians, and Persians, and the later Greeks and Romans—while slighting the reason that these raiders might have descended on clan settlements, swinging their bronze weapons. We should ask ourselves why the Macedonian brute Alexander (356–323 BCE), who militarily terrorized millions from his home country eastward into India and southward into North Africa, slashing, burning, murdering, and enslaving, all in the service of theft, should have the sobriquet "the Great." Ditto the Spartans who seized Laconia and Messenia, enslaving their inhabitants as "helots," causing untold suffering, while all that schoolchildren (and moviegoers) hear about are the

three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae, who held off the invading armies of Persia in 480 BCE.

Cheihk Anta Diop originally pointed out in 1974 that horses enabled attack, including the violent chariot invasion of Egypt by the Canaanite Hyksos, 1730–1580 BCE.[20] Clearly, archers and swordsmen in chariots have freedom of motion for mayhem, so that the wheel (long presented as a sign of "civilization") was vital to Bronze Age raiding. Individual, mounted raiders became dangerous in the region once the cupid bow appeared around 1000 BCE, allowing men on horses the same freedom of massacre as chariot warriors.[21] This is not greatness, however; it is murder. When did honor and reverence move from life-giving nurturance and rebirth to war, murder, and slavery? (See Fig. 4.3.)

We know that Egypt was the prize of the raiding hordes because it was a cornucopia of treasures, from food to technology to culture.[22] Diop

Figure 4.3 General Engelbrecht on a bear-hunting expedition, January 10, 1942. Military Museum, Helsinki, Finland.

Photograph by Tulio. Use permitted under a CC BY 4.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

unhesitatingly identified the high cultural standards of Egypt as not a little due to the fact that the culture was matriarchal in form, and I cannot help but think that its woman-friendly order was part of the rationale for attack.[23]

By and large, the Bronze Age was restricted to Central Eurasia, sometimes simply identified as Anatolia but including the desert areas of the eastern Mediterranean, where artifacts easily last in the aridity following the middle and late Pleistocene. However, culture existed there long, long before. Anatomically modern humans came in (along with other species) during interglacial periods, when the climate was much more moist than it is now.[24] Habitation developed into agriculture along alluvial sites.[25] This much is scientifically shown, but from there, nineteenth- and twentieth-century racism simply assumed that hierarchy, fortified hometowns, and armies necessarily followed, everywhere in every epoch. This is patently untrue (large-scale agriculture in North America, for instance, occurred within egalitarian matriarchal cooperatives),[26] but somehow, the thinking remained that Bronze Age armies, patriarchy, hierarchy, and violence were all perfectly normal stages in the development of "civilization." They are not "normal," but specific to raiding during the time and place of their origin. All that the Bronze Age marked was the advent of pillaging cultures, a situation that evolves when there are not enough assets to support everyone present in a place. I suspect that scarcity hit once the land began to dry up, with pastoralism pushing out straight-up agriculture—another poorly examined development.

In egalitarian Old Europe, cultures began to change significantly around 4300 BCE as the warring hordes of hungry Indo-European peoples extended their conquests westward and northward from the Black Sea. No weapons except implements for hunting were found in European graves until around 4500–4300 BCE.[27] There is, however, evidence of budding hierarchy. In Corded Ware ("Kurgan") graves, we find the evidence hinting at the myths and sagas, as we see men who were obviously singled out for importance, perhaps a king here or war chief there, tucked away in a burial mound, with his horse, his dog, his weapons, and not infrequently, his wife and slaves, too.[28]

Timo Heikkilä, among others, argues that in Scandinavia, the biggest of these changes occurred around 2500 BCE.[29] Not much remains in Finland of a full-blown matriarchal or "matristic" era, despite the many references to Terra Feminarum, where women ruled.[30] However, the Golden Woman, the Great Goddess or Mother of the Finno-Ugric as well as part of the Slavic North, began to disappear at the beginning of the second millennium BCE,

surviving only in overgrown traces.[31] The forgotten Vikings of the old Rus in Bjarmian Russia, for instance, retained a puzzling spirit or goddess they called Jomali. For the last few hundred years, Jomali has been presented as binary male, but "his" feminine nature was retained, especially by artists. Although there is considerable disagreement on the linguistic derivation of the term "Jomali," there is an account of Jomali—and of his mother, "Kolfrosta," who was, suggestively enough, "in charge of the temple," a place of "gold and jewels." Jomali was largely gender neutral, so that it might have been translations that made the gender-neutral, woman-leaning Jomali emphatically male.[32] I elaborate on the strong evidence for the originally female Jomali in my forthcoming book on Terra Feminarum. It is most likely that patriarchal attitudes toward the female divine and the privileging of the not-so-neutral pronouns in translations account for the ambivalence and masculated interpretation of Jomali. The masculine form of "god" is often used to refer to deities even when they are clearly female. As a result, the feminine gender of the deity is concealed or censored from historical records.[33]

A strong piece of evidence regarding the former respect of bears and women is the unique energy charges that both were believed to possess, energy that women could use productively, now, to protect both cattle and children, as well as the husband's hunting and fishing gear.[34] This power echoes older and more capacious charges. Some of the answers to why attitudes toward women changed dramatically may lie in the Paleolithic era, especially with the comet swarm of 12,900 BP. Perhaps the comet swarm occasioned the disastrous "ten suns" of ancient Chinese tradition, necessitating the Divine Archer Hou Yi "to shoot down the nine false suns" (which sound like comets).[35] If the "suns" were comets, then the falling of the nine false suns brought on the Younger Dryas, and life suddenly became very hard. Barbara Alice Mann suggests that once the climate changed, the killing began. Of course, Gimbutas held that matriarchy ended when armed male hordes began invading and raiding women-led cultures, but Mann sees this development as sequential, not separate from climate change.

The nine false sons/suns are very suggestive in terms of the matriarch of Finnish mythology, Louhi. In the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*, she is the Bear Mother and shape-shifting shaman, who lived inside the Copper Mountain, the uterine underworld where she once ground the grain and hid it "in a cliff of copper."[36] So far, she is the Golden Woman. Then, in the patriarchal revision of her narrative, recently turned into a sci-fi epic by Emil Petaja, a free-floating, generalized blame for all life's ills was heaped on Louhi.[37] In a

dramatic turnaround, she was accused of occasioning most of the evils that befell the ancient geographical area that came to be named as Finland. This was an explicit reversal of Louhi's original role as an expert midwife, shaman, cultural leader, and, most probably, goddess helping pregnant women bring forth life. Now, suddenly, Louhi is a criminal, and her crime becomes her midwifery: she helped Loviatar, "the old ogress," blind, mythic kin to Louhi, give birth to disaster.

In the standard *Kalevala*, Loviatar is impregnated by a "furious storm wind," a "blast," roaring in "from the east."[38] Nine becomes an accursed number, first, as the nine months of Loviatar's difficult pregnancy are recited in gory detail. The fetus remains in utero till the start of the tenth month, when in desperation, Loviatar goes to Louhi, who, "in secret," helps her.[39] Loviatar is heavily reviled along with "the nine brats she bore in a single night of summer."[40] Her children are "dire disease" come to "slay" her own people.[41] She also sends the "bitter weather," freezing "frost" to "stay" the people in their "plantings," "sowings," and "reapings." She "conjured iron hailstones," the "steely ones" to pelt the people.[42] This sounds *very* much like the nuclear winter occasioned at the falling of the nine false suns that she birthed,

> in a single night of summer
> In one steaming, in one bathing,
> From one belly, from one wombful.[43]

It is not unlikely that a spate of diseases did accompany the aftermath of the swarmed meteor strike, and of those diseases named, such as rickets, cancer, gout, boils, and scabbing, most result from malnutrition and unaccustomed exposure.[44]

Louhi and Loviatar thus become ogresses in later tellings, bringing only death by cancer in the nuclear winter of iron hailstones. Through the "nine brats," they have betrayed life; they have betrayed the people. At the same time, the number nine, a sacred number evoking the nine months of pregnancy, a matriarchal number, gets turned into opposite associations. Now Louhi gives birth to disease in the most sacred site, the sauna, instead of being celebrated for bringing forth life, grain, and all good things, symptomatic of the sacrilege concerning matriarchal beliefs and practices. Louhi is even accused of locking sun and moon inside her mountain, depriving people of light and warmth. Importantly, however, in traditional variants, she is still credited with freeing the luminaries from the Copper Mountain, and at the

same time opening women's wombs so that children can be born.[45] Clearly, there is a mismatch of purpose in these disparate tellings, with the masculine version birthing an oppositional ethos, the master imaginary.[46]

I think that this period of cultural shift was when Bear and Bear's life force, the mythic mother of all the animals who sends them to earth to become humans, were shoved aside. It began when Bear's love of the Woman transformed into the ravishment of the Bear woman. Rape is a juridical notion, proceeding from assumptions of male ownership of the female body. Thus, it is important when the Bear is presented as an aggressor, seizing instead of wooing, and the woman's encounter with Bear turns from nurturance to rape as, for example, in the Anatolian story of "Hadice" and in the Tungus (Siberian) "Bear Tale." In both stories, the bear steals the woman.[47] These stories very much follow the Bronze Age Greek script for, say, Persephone (Kore), who is abducted and carried down into the underworld in sexual bondage. This tale had large coinage in Ukraine, where *Rape of Persephone* is the featured mural on the rear wall of a first-century tomb in Kerch, on the Black Sea coast.[48] The rape story emerged from the patriarchal context, since male interference in women's relations with their mothers is common in male-dominated stories. It is enough to also think of Little Red Riding Hood, whose trip to the menstrual hut to learn wisdom traditions from her mother and grandmother is interrupted by the big bad wolf.[49]

Rape in the stories of the Woman Who Married the Bear therefore indicates that patriarchy interfered in matriarchal culture by interfering with female narratives—David Anthony's linguistic chauvinism in action—revising the Bear tale to indict the woman.[50] Mary Condren mentions the same shift occurring in Celtic culture under the invading Normans, with the rape of the abbess of Kildare, initiated by Dermot Mc Murrough's soldiers in 1169 CE.[51] Condren contends that this crime "symbolized the end of an era for women and religion in Ireland," making any future power women might hold "derivative." The change was particularly deleterious to women's spiritual authority, which now "could be overruled by any male cleric, no matter how inept, power hungry, or degenerate." Although the Christian church pretended to be protecting women from violent men, Condren asks archly just who was protecting the women from the "power of the male church."[52]

We also see the crucial sister-brother relationship change. Typically, when the primary male-female relationship of a culture is between sister and brother, we are looking at a matriarchal system.[53] Thus, in matriarchal plots, reflecting matrilineal social arrangements, we see an undying commitment

between sisters and brothers that far outweighs any conjugal bond with nonkin males. Sisters are prepared to sacrifice wealth, crown, reputation, the love of their mates, even their children and their own lives, in the effort to rescue their brothers.[54] Such relationships are still evident in fairy tales, such as Hansel and Gretel. In the *Kalevala*, however, the brother betrays the sister. There is an incident in which Aino, a young maiden, goes to the forest in order to make a bath switch, when she is accosted by Väinämöinen, or as in folk versions, Osmoinen, a gender-ambivalent bear figure.[55] Aino becomes a victim of both sexual harassment and brotherly violence: Väinämöinen saves Aino's brother's, Joukahainen's, life because he promised him Aino's hand in return. Her mother, too, pressures her to have Väinämöinen, but Aino will not agree to marry this old shaman, even though he is renowned for his singing and his shamanic skills. Here, we are witnessing a life-and-death struggle between sister and brother and, worse, a betrayal by the mother, who strains Aino perhaps the most intensively of all.[56] Against it all, Aino prefers to drown herself or—as it is possible to interpret the incident—to go underground to join mysterious maidens sitting on a boulder.[57] That is, she prefers the old ways of women's caves, women's amniotic water, and women's bears.[58]

No doubt the Finnish matriarch, Louhi, "mistress of the North," "Old Crone," belongs among the preceding mythic figures. Although she meets the southern hero Väinämöinen with generosity and hospitality, helping Pohjola, the weeping senex figure that gets lost at sea and ends up in the north farm, Louhi is still demoted to an evil witch. The epic ends with the words that the old shaman hero will yet return despite the tragic loss of Sampo, the Finnish cornucopia and mill of magic, and despite a storyline that indicates the replacement of pagan with Christian male leaders.[59] In Norse sagas and the story of the Golden Woman among the Ob-Ugrians we also learn that the goddess cannot be killed; three times burned, she re-emerges from the ashes.[60] Thus we see that the pagan men compete with women in seeking rebirth.

Feminists in religious and cultural studies have noted that the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy is evident in how myths are transformed to accommodate and even approve de facto rape. The separation of mothers from daughters is essential to make this work. Just as the interference of Hades in the relationship between Demeter and her daughter Kore/Persephone in Greek myths is seen to represent the way in which patriarchy comes to separate the sacred bond of mother and daughter, the better to introduce male control of women and insert mythic stories themselves, the brothers' new

role as enemies of sisters also historically reflects the intrusion of patriarchal plots and social structures. If and when the woman is running away from a "happy marriage," then creeping patriarchal influence is likely. The values of patriarchal marriage were in opposition to the Original Instructions in the woman-bear connection, for the man is alien and inimical to her, unlike her bear lover.

The Homeric Hymn to Demeter shoulders all the marks of this transition in messaging, in the wild grief of Demeter so poignantly seeking her missing daughter, while "no one was willing to tell her the truth" of what had happened to Persephone, not the gods, not the humans, and not even Demeter's usual "messengers of the truth," the birds.[61] This tale begins like a regular Bear marriage story, with Persephone out picking flowers, but almost immediately, the plot deviates from a loving Bear match to a stranger rape, as, unbeknownst to Persephone, Zeus had haphazardly "given" her "away" to Hades, who promptly "seized" her.[62] The woman has become a plaything. Not accepting this flip of the script, Demeter does everything in her power to reclaim her beloved daughter. As it turns out, much remains in her power, so that reckless Zeus is ultimately pressured into agreeing that Persephone can spend "two-thirds" of every year with her mother.[63]

Notably, unlike Aino's mother, Demeter did not give up but staunchly refused to bend to the patriarchal will. Instead, she pushed and pushed until she had negotiated a sort of settlement, probably the best one she was likely to get from a volatile, capricious, rough raider like Zeus. This Hymn of Demeter has been dated to the seventh and early sixth centuries BCE, so we see in action the inflection point at which women still held power, but not full power.[64] Interestingly, the concept of thirds appears again in a pretty clear reference back to the three realms of birds/air, creepy-crawlies/earth, and bears/underground. In this schema, Demeter actually takes the lion's share of the win—two-thirds to Zeus's one-third. Notice that the thirds also played into the Gilgamesh epic, which gives him as two-thirds god.[65] Here Gilgamesh does better than Zeus. Thus, first we see that the Bear woman script was still a commonplace, even if it was in the process of being repurposed. Second, we see the script was shifting more quickly to favor men in Gilgamesh's Ur than in Demeter's Greece.

In the rewrite, the new theme emerges of a patriarchal "hero" ravishing a maiden by stealing her away to where her matristic social system cannot protect her from patrilineal violence. In such a setting, the woman is clearly in need of "rescue" from a fate she did not choose, another twist on the old

tale. Brother and sister remain central to this portion of the story, but as revised. The relatives of the woman who marries the bear tend not to accept the "abduction" of their kin or to honor their sister's outrageous affair. Often the brothers look for their sister to drag her back. In one Siberian tale, it is the brother-in-law, "a great shaman," who comes for the abductee. In this version, the brother-in-law actually turns into a bear himself to fight off her violent bear-master-husband, who had been viciously beating her. Once home among her human kin, at first, she cannot shake her bearness, and then nine months later she gives birth to a "boy who had bear ears."[66] In this version, the bear has turned cruel as a husband, while the firm identification of the rescuer as a brother-in-law, himself a bear, suggests a different familial structure is at hand, a patriarchal form. The two males are patrilineally kin, so that protection comes to the woman not from her mother or her mother's sons, but from her husband's male relatives. We are certainly looking at a patriarchal shift. We also have the impression that, in the sisters and brothers of the story, we are now talking male-defined, nuclear family relations, instead of matrilineal clan collectives as before, not the least because terms like "brother-in-law" are specified.

Now that the lines of loyalty between brothers and sisters have been rejiggered, brothers are redirecting their sisters' sexuality for male gain.[67] This involves separating women from their chosen bear husbands, their green lovers. In most versions, the woman's bonds with Bear are severed ceremonially, as in the ancient Greek Brauron ceremony, when the not-so-tame bear (of menarche) "scratches" the girl.[68] In Sami bear rituals, the women are not even supposed to look at the bear because of the potential for Bear marriage, but they look through a ring anyway. This no doubt originates in the Sami tradition of a sister who marries a bear, after her brothers are quite cruel to her. The Bear husband kills all but the youngest of the brothers in revenge. Later, he allows the youngest to kill him and reunite with the sister. The widow cannot stand to witness her lover being skinned, however, so she peeks at the operation through a brass ring.[69] Clearly, this signals women's unwillingness to severe the ties to the Bear husband, that is, their control of their own sexuality. The gaze between women and bears is not as unbearable as men would like it to be.

Just what bearness means is now at issue. In this Siberian tale, once home, the rescued girl constantly "swoons" and must be "restored."[70] This may well involve the initiation of the girl as she experiences her new life cycles from menstruation to birth-giving. When a girl first experiences menarche,

particularly without the support of a matriarchal structure, she may very well feel beaten up and wish to fall down in a swoon!

The Greek rituals of Arkteia lend support to such an interpretation. The Arkteia was a sort of patriarchal timeout for young girls, probably at the onset of menarche. Arkteian customs are hard to ferret out at this distance of time, but some intensive work as been done to pull them into the light based on illustrated vases found in Brauron, Piraeus, and the Athenian Agora.[71] Such things as hairstyles and the types of robes now worn signaled the new life phase.[72] During this process, girls were actively characterized as "bears."[73] One could argue that becoming bear through menstruation meant that the realm the initiate visited with the bear spouse was a shamanic Otherworld, the world of the Othered girl as she "became a woman" in the patriarchal sense of being ripe for male-directed childbearing. In that case, sanctuaries, temples, and church "naves" are latter-day incarnations of the bear's cave.

The emphasis is now on the male offspring of the bear. In French-speaking countries he is known as Jean de l'Ours or Jean l'Ourson;[74] in Italian, he is Gian dell' Orso;[75] in Russian, Ivashko Medvedko;[76] in Serbian, Bärensohn;[77] in Hanover, Germany, Peter Bär;[78] and in general German lore, the Bear's Ear, Bärenohr.[79] Controlling women's sexual behavior has moved from women, themselves, to men, purportedly to guarantee patrilineage, so that property rights flow along the father's line, hence the importance of sons to oversee women's reproduction. Now, instead of the woman being the central concern as she navigates beardom, she has become a plot device, often the "imperiled daughter."[80] Who "saves" whom, then, shifts. Moreover, why women should need "saving" from menstrual self-direction is left unsaid, but male fear of "wasted" female blood clearly makes the cut.

In looking at Armenian bear husbands, Sima Aprahamian sees the story as dramatizing the relationship between "Nature" and "Culture" as it touches women. To accomplish this, she deconstructs the oppositional dualism that characterizes Cartesian logic. Generations of Western Armenian women passed along a version of Bear marriage in which a young woman is gathering firewood for cooking, a probable allusion to the heat of the womb. When she tries to carry her load home, however, it seems to be usually heavy. The extra weight is the bear lover, attempting to pull her back. He takes her to his lair, where they fall desperately in love, she giving birth to "three furry babies." When her brother finds them, not only does he kill the bear lover, but he also kills the babies. He is able to force his deeply grieving sister to return to their human home, but she refuses ever to speak again.[81] Aprahamanian

noted that the narrator of another, similar tale "emphasized" that, far from having been "abducted" by the bear, the bride most willingly "ran away" with him.[82] Here, although patriarchy kills the bear and his cultural progeny, it cannot kill the green women, who continue to resist.[83]

Something remains of the pure bear religion of old Europe, as Susan Macmillan Kains found during her field trips to Romania's remotest villages. In recent years, Kains has even discovered unrecorded, previously unknown bear carnival rituals in the Carpathian Mountains.[84] Considering this ancient religion among the villagers to be a vestige of the oldest goddess culture in Europe, she was awestruck by the discovery that the Romanian villagers retained an unbroken tradition, going back to Paleolithic days, in the caves of Transylvania that sheltered them from ecological and later human onslaughts. The Romanian villagers retreated to these caves for safety and survival during the era of glaciation, the Ottoman era, and the Communist era, forming a set of traditions going back for more than ten thousand years. If they are as they sound, they reference survival through the Younger Dryas.[85]

This is a story of the "retreat of the indigenous mind," as Jürgen Kremer calls the process that condenses from the woman's—dare I say from the Bear's?—perspective.[86] We Finnish women are supposed to understand bear's language, but I have to admit that I have mostly lost it. Here in northern Finland, there is, however, a famous Bear Man, Sulo Karjalainen, who adopts orphaned bear cubs.[87] He shows that it is possible to crawl into the bear's lair with his grown-up cub adoptee without coming to harm. One cub he adopted in 2021 apparently refused to go to sleep in hibernation for the winter. She wanted to jump into Karjalainen's bed, instead. I can see this happening in ancient days, as well, stimulating some of the sleeping-with-bears stories still afloat.

These tales of drastic loss for women under patriarchy bring home that women do not necessarily value kinship that oppresses them but defy the societal rules and even refuse speech as acts of rebellion. The woman chooses the wild bearadise of the cave over the Christianized "paradise" of the father, the son, and the "uncleanliness" of her reproductive functions.

Separatist attitudes, such as the notions that women should be secluded during menstruation and that sexual intercourse pollutes men, enforce the physical separation of the sexes and might have started benignly when women retreated in birthing cults.[88] Such attitudes vary in number and intensity from society to society. In some societies, menstruating women are barely noticed. In others, menstruating women are secluded in special huts

where they occupy a position of social marginality because they are thought to harbor a terrific, usually destructive, force. In a different expression of the same underlying theme, sexual contact with a woman is thought to sap male strength, weaken a woman's nursing child, or endanger the whole community.[89]

As Joanna Hubbs noted, for all its pretensions of bringing love, Christianity brought nothing but scourge and dispossession to Russian women. In fact, Christianity was a high sign of class status rather than any sort of liberation, so that peasants rejected it heavily. Consequently, in Kyiv, Ukraine, women "resisted" the "imposition of Christianity" with "great stubbornness."[90] It is no secret that rural folks like the Romanian villagers mentioned above often retain the original cultural values and lifeways despite the colonizers, from psaltered missionaries to attacking hordes of patriarchal raiders. Heide Goettner-Abendroth shows that patriarchy tends not to be successful in erasing all customs and traces of the other worldview, even when the official stories and rules of behavior are forcibly transformed.[91]

In the Armenian story, the well and water come up, as do wells and water in many bear traditions. Of course, this refers to the deep well of amniotic fluid in a woman through the metaphor of the watery fertility of the bear's cave. As such, it is no doubt very ancient, so we should not be surprised to find it in Genesis. Although too easily overlooked by modern commentators, early on in Jewish tradition, women held considerable power: There are the matriarchs as well as the patriarchs of tradition, even if the women's stories have since been revised to come from the patriarchal point of view. Thus, instead of saying that Rebekkah was at the Nahor well, on the lookout for a furry bear husband, Genesis 24:10–14 assures us that Abraham initiated the action, seeking a wife for his son Isaac at the town of Nahor. Nevertheless, there seem to have been stylized exchanges whereby men could tell just which women were in the market for a teddy bear and furry babies. Like Rebekkah, they were the ones who replied to a request for a drink of water by offering to refresh whole camels—that is, they had an abundance of amniotic fluid ready and willing to start making fur babies.

Consequently, we should not be surprised by the number and geographic spread of Bear women at wells, from Armenia to Ireland. Mary Condren relates Celtic tales of Brigit to similar paradigms of natality and the life force. The goddess's "most prolific" allusions are "the wells scattered all over Europe." These include such ancient sacred sites as the wells of Faughart (also, Fochart), over which Christians (of course) built their own shrine. Like

the Faughart wells, these sites are often located "on the top of mountains and hills," breasts of Mother Earth in many cultures.[92] In the *Kalevala*, even Bear himself was created by Louhi, the matriarch of the North, who threw wool in water, and behold, a soft and harmless bear emerged.[93] For these gentle stories to turn into tales of female transgression and male "rescue" of "pure" womanhood under patriarchal family values shows the upshot of the raids visited on matriculture by Bronze Age violence.

Today, far from celebrating menarche, the bear ceremonial contains elements of male initiation into bravery, the skills of the hunt, and the killing of the bear, with the thanking of the bear tagged on at the end as an afterthought. (See Fig. 4.3.)

There are also war sagas that relate to bear feasts. After the many years of studying variants of the Woman Who Married the Bear, I find it odd that the woman is simply not included as part of the overall analysis of the bear ceremonials or the debates regarding its deep roots in the bear cult sagas. In a Scandinavian tradition traced at least to the twelfth century, bears are even shown as taking sides in a human battle, with a major champion bear working shamanistically from a distant location, better able to manage events than if he had been physically present, a touch attributed to Sami traditional influence on Germanic tales.[94] Clearly, war and hunting have been conflated, probably through the nexus of death, which, as Barbara Alice Mann notes, is all that men are able to make from blood.[95] (See Fig. 4.4.)

Even though the woman is hidden behind the bear's tail/tale, she is necessarily central to Swedish tradition, for the descent of the royal line is through her marriage with a "gigantic bear." As told in the patriarchal period, in grabbing the woman, Progenitor Bear was originally motivated by the desire for a meal, but once he sees the woman in good light, his motives are transformed "to purposes of wicked lust." He promptly rapes the unnamed "beauty." Now, the tale mutates even further into Beauty and the Beast: the girl's "beauty tame[d] her abductor's ruthless savagery." Hunters manage to surround and kill the bear, thus bringing the girl back to human habitation, where she gives birth to the bear's son. The violence continues as this cub-man eventually learns of the murder of his bear-father and, in revenge, kills those responsible.[96] This is a tale recrafted, bereft of its life-giving continuance, in favor of death-dealing retribution. Sex now becomes wicked, perhaps because water is nowhere in evidence. The woman is never named; in fact, the bear and the bear's son are never named. It is not until the third generation that the Bear marriage progeny is named—"Thorgils Prakeleg, who

Figure 4.4 The bear and the bear killer, date unknown. Military Museum, Helsinki, Finland.

Photograph by Heikki Aho. Use permitted under a CC BY 4.0 international license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

lacked not an ounce of his father's valour," which apparently consisted of the ability to murder and feel righteous about it.[97]

Whereas before, in woman-oriented stories, the brothers were motivated by concern, now they simply loathe their sister, so that she must flee them for dear life, taking refuge with a kindly old bear in his den. Enough of the original sense remains in one particular Sami story, that the bear is loving and gentle, so eventually the pair marry. Because he is old, however, the bear decides to sacrifice himself to her brother-hunters, but first asks her which of them had been particularly hateful to her. Now violence enters, as he kills her eldest brother-enemy, sparing the younger brothers, the youngest not because he was actively decent to his sister but because he was not as bad as his elder brothers. Next Bear yields his wife to her remaining brothers and allows himself to be killed by them, although his wife covers her face, so as not to watch him die. At the subsequent feast, the son of bear arrives, realizes that it

is his father in the cooking pot, and calls on his father to leap out of the pot—unless the hunters give him an equal share in the feast. They do.[98]

This revision starts out as a woman's tradition, but quickly dissolves into a male-focused story of hunting, killing, revenge, and greed, in which the woman is tokenized as a motive but is denied agency, before she is forgotten, altogether, even as an object. After the woman's flight, the story turns entirely on male actions, including the astounding desire of the son for a part in feasting on his father. This is a clear indication of the fact that custody of women has passed from themselves to men. The wife's only escape from familial abuse is into an uncertain marriage, which her violent brothers may interrupt at any time, and not even her own son will help his father survive. The sister-wife-mother is forced to participate in violence against the only refuge she has enjoyed, while her son forgets her claims in his rush to grab his share of what his father has left behind. This story, once about female fertility, re/birth, and continuance, is now about violence, patrilineage, and male squabbles over inheritance.

As mentioned before, in Spain, the cub-son is often called "John the Bear." Although human, mostly, John the Bear was purportedly raised by a mother Bear.[99] He nevertheless has a father, a human worker, who had some stern advice for him: It was "very bad to clean oneself in front of another."[100] There are obvious allegorical allusions to machismo in this advice, but still, the notion of not "cleaning himself in front of another" echoes the constant opening refrain of the old tales, in which the woman begins by "stepping in it" (bear excrement), becoming irate, and cursing the bear for leaving his mess smack in the middle of the path. There are obvious allegorical allusions for *matrismo* here, but the larger context is a struggle over who is the final, cultural authority.

Thus, as the story moves from the forest-and-cave realm of the bear to the pastoral realm of human-directed animal activity, the story permutates into one of male values, specifically in reference to other males. Lateral, male-directed chest-thumping has replaced holistic, mother-focused cosmic renewal. Heide Goettner-Abendroth notes that, when shifts like this take place from matriarchal to patriarchal stories, the change in the telling puts the hero in a more active position than he had been in matriarchal myths, while the women are "relegated" to "passive roles."[101] When the focus shifts toward heroism, we also move to a conquest-oriented worldview, in which creativity is wrested from mothers and female shamans and given to men. The end result is a violent, hierarchical, and eco-phobic worldview that

becomes normalized. Just being biologically female will not help vision either. Assimilated women likewise adopt a violent way of life as normal. Like Aino's mother, they have been mentally colonized.

This transition occurs in the Bear marriage and its variants as they reflect structures and plot elements similar to those of the very violent Christian legend. Both Mary and Bera are virgins at the outset of their tales, and each parthenogenetically births a son in a cave. So far, so ancient, but then the masculinized version kicks in as, having performed her only function, Mary-Bera is discarded as a worn-out husk. Water does make an appearance, but only so that Son may walk all over it. From here on out, it is the Adventures of Father and Son, as Jesus runs about talking to men, explaining spiritual reality to them, until he is betrayed by his male friends to his male enemies. His supposedly all-powerful father cannot save him when men of another god kill him, although there is a lot of writhing and wriggling about that, to let Dad off that hook for abandoning his Son.

If the Christian son is hung on a metaphorical tree, then in the Finnish bear ceremonial, the skull of the slain bear is brought back to the forest and placed on the tree Hongatar, the spirit guardian and Mother of Bear. This ritual is also related to the cosmic wedding between bear and a woman.[102] Instead of life, renewal, and the celebration of spring and light, however, this patriarchal version shivers our timbers by emphasizing death and sacrifice, with the promise of renewal coming only in a smarmy afterlife, which one may or may not achieve based on ever-changing rules and cosmic favor. In the bear ceremonial, the slain bear is given food, drink, and tobacco; its head is decorated, albeit not quite with a crown of thorns. We see elements of the Eucharist, as well, in the eating of the body and soul of the son of a god. Likewise, the hunters divide the spoils of the hunt among themselves—with Bear as last supper—often exclusive of the women. Almost becoming bear, themselves, the diners growl as they drink beer from his skull. In fact, the rite of eating the bear was thought to dispossess Bear of his prowess, unlike the eating of Jesus, which spread his prowess.[103]

These are undeniably patriarchal religious elements inserted into both holy scripts, even though the original looked Bear-y different before editing. Indeed, some have claimed that the entire spectacle of a son of god relates to the Egyptian drama of Isis and Osiris. In this tale, Osiris is dismembered by his brother, Seth, but the sister of both, Isis, gathers back up the pieces of Osiris, even reconstituting his penis, so that she may impregnated herself with it to bear Horus.[104] We are, of course, talking the seasons, here, with the

seasons of death as disorder, and the female principle as renewing life in the spring, from the remains of the day.

For Finns, *väki* represents the spirit potency present especially in women and bears, waiting to be tapped by those in the know. A dynamic force, *väki* will not manifest unless mobilized, but once released, it meets and combines with other *väki*, becoming a unified force to be reckoned with—say, like a pregnant woman.[105] The notion of female virility as "uncleanliness" reflects the male revulsion for *väki* potencies beyond their ken: menstruation, pregnancy, and the breaking water just preceding childbirth. The patriarchal defamation of female *väki* as a polluting presence requiring strict, male-shepherded taboos originates here, in male disgust for menstrual blood. It is why the strong *väki* charges in both women and bears must not interact, meet, and wreak havoc (on men). In truth, the special *väki* power of sexualized female energy is proof of why women are respected in the ancient traditions, but not wishing to step in the bear's dung-hill, I will refrain from claiming that I have the one correct explanation of the Original Instructions. Still, I advise: "Take no shit, and do no harm."

Anthropologists have had interesting things to say about the notion of women's "polluted" state during menses and birth-giving. Mary Douglas thinks that pollution beliefs serve as analogies for the social order to help protect its boundaries, but who sets those boundaries?[106] Douglas says that we cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning emissions without recognizing "the body" as a "symbol of society," thereby to realize the "powers and dangers credited to social structure" as they are replicated "in small" in the "human body."[107] Following the framework suggested by Douglas's analysis of pollution beliefs, it is possible to claim that beliefs about the virulence of the power inherent in female bodily or sexual functioning is neither a reflection of castration nor of sexual inequality. Rather, the presence of such beliefs provides us with a clue to the presence of critical human concerns, which have changed from one era to the next. By projecting these concerns onto women, different cultures have set up an imaginary screen onto which to project, and thereby control, the dangerous forces they face.

In some cultures, beliefs about the danger of menstrual blood have turned the equation of femaleness as life and growth into femaleness as death and destruction. By attaching the destructive functions performed by males in hunting and warfare to the female, these beliefs remake women in the male image.[108] Control is misdirected onto women, with restrictions separating the sexes proliferating most elaborately in concentrated settlements.[109] This

is probably because the smell of menstrual blood is most obvious in crowded, larger settlements. Douglas holds that it is a frightening smell because it is reminiscent of death.[110]

Being a fluid that flows from the body, menstrual blood is like the fluid that drains from the newly dead. Both types of fluids represent the loss of a vital essence. The more people experience death in nature, the more likely they are to view menstrual blood as dangerous.[111] Another kind of symmetry consists in the belief that menstrual blood saps male energy and draws the power from his weapons. The symmetry established by this conception can be likened to positive and negative charges, in which the negative force believed to be inherent in menstrual blood has the power to obliterate male physical strength. In order to recharge themselves with the requisite energy, men avoid female bodily fluids.[112] As a consequence, mutual avoidance is observed between the sexes to the point of rigid sexual separation in many activities.[113]

Mary Douglas argues that pollution beliefs, whether about the danger of menstrual blood, about contact with the dead, or about the danger of certain foods, prevent threatened disturbances of the social order. In some cultures, the disturber is entirely cut off from social life for a specified period, living in a condition of extreme danger because of the blood he has shed. During this time, he may not touch food with his hands, and at the end of the period of isolation, the hands are purified.[114] A newly menstruating girl in certain cultures may likewise be isolated and forbidden to eat with her fingers, perhaps because of the power and force that are welling within her. This may also be why men are warned that to touch a girl during her first menses will result in his arm swelling up.[115] All such cultural beliefs spring from a deliberate realignment around explanations of swelling, from the child in the female belly to male body parts. Clearly, in such instances, the "correct" swelling is that of the penis, with all other swelling uncontrolled by men a product of transgression against taboos.

The asymmetrical blood relations between the genders may have resulted from attempts to ensure survival in harsh times. In the wake of big changes during, say, a nuclear winter, new tactics to regain control surfaced, including a desperate separation of the sexes to limit activities like childbearing that would further strain already pressured survival. Just as the presumed failure of matriarchal practices might have been blamed for natural disasters, women's bodies came to be mapped as "polluted" and "polluting" the social body. The patriarchal symbolism of menstruation changes from culture

to culture, but it always reflects social values that involves symbolic female "dirt" as "matter out of place," needing regulation.[116] Especially in the hunt and in war, the smell of blood had to stay in the right place—in prey and enemies. The happy association of menstruation with continuation was lost under patriarchy, whose new focus fixed strongly on controlling and setting boundaries for women's blood-smelling bodies. Especially as regards the sacred, taboos were applied to concentrate all the divine capital in the male gender and its emissions.

Such a response to menstrual blood may seem illogical, because blood in women signals their readiness to bear life, whereas the blood drawn by hunters signals death. However, by killing animals, men also bring life, albeit life one step removed, in the form of animal protein, a food with a high prestige in hunting cultures. Peggy Reeves Sanday sees blood as associated with both "life and death in the experience of males," so that men go immediately to the presumption that female blood also pertains to death as well as life. Thus, they bestow "corresponding connotations" on the "blood of women."[117] I believe that Douglas's comparison of the Mbuti and the Hadza of East Africa is most relevant for understanding the restrictions on women also in the context of the bear ceremonial.[118] Whereas for the Mbuti "Neither sex, age, nor kinship order[s] their behavior in strictly ordained categories," for the Hadza, there were distinctly "two hostile classes."[119] The Hadza sexual division becomes pronounced during the dry season, when prey and water are scarce. During the wet season, however, when food is abundant and evenly dispersed, the sexes live together relatively harmoniously.[120] The point here is that, when there are no imminent threats to survival, there is no corresponding need to control sexual behavior around the smell of blood.

Perhaps humanity's best bet for surviving the twenty-first century is to excavate wisdom from the time before it was patriarchally defined as transgression. Even if it is not practical to reproduce the complete contents of the Original Instructions from way back when—I doubt that anyone modern wants to live in a cave, although sauna experiences are being appreciated more and more—we can reconstruct a life-oriented ethos by reinforcing communal sentiments, revivifying gift-giving as a value, and restoring respect even for the most different among us. Condren tells us that once she and her colleagues began to scratch the surface of Brigit traditions, they found a rich treasury of songs, poetry, and sites that effectively evoked what might be called cellular memories. Modern Canadian efforts to reconstitute a thealogy of Brigit attracted people coming from "diverse European and international communities." Through what she termed the "cellular atonement" of old

rituals, even those from "far distant European or other heritages" recognized the artifacts used in Brigit ceremonials, because those items had preexisted across Europe.[121] Brigit might be called Bera or Aino or Artemis of Louhi, or any of a dozen other names including the Ukrainian Bereginya, "mother of all living things on Earth, the goddess of life, fertility, and maternity," but throughout, she remains the Lady of the Lake, awaiting our notice.[122]

Condren claims that, originally, Brigit lore emphasized the creativity of relationships that healed over wounds, using "stories and rituals," as betokened by various artifacts expressing those values. These were challenged by the "rising power of the father gods," plural, who elevated themselves into control via threats that turned into actual, physical sacrifice, including the sacrifice of children. In particular, sacrifice of life marked a serious turning point in the transition from mother-focused spiritual systems to father-focused systems. Worse, the life sacrificed was weak life, which could not stand up for itself: captive animals, captive humans, and worst of all, small children. Now "milk was replaced by bloodshed." In a gruesome imitation of women's ability to bleed without dying, men, too, had found a way to bleed without dying: Sacrifice of the Other.[123]

Clearly, there was still resistance to sacrifice three thousand years ago. Leviticus 18:21 greatly deplores the rituals of Moloch, a "god" of the Israelites, the Persians, or the Canaanites (it depends on who is talking), who made helpless children "pass through fire," that is, they were broiled, alive.[124] Scholars may argue about whether such a ritual ever took place, or if it did, try to unload it onto Persians or Canaanites, but it rings true, particularly in light of those other great blood sacrifices in the Torah and the Christian Bible. The Sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah shows Abraham unable to go through with his god's bloody demand for his son's life (Genesis 22:1–19), but Christians widely interpret the story as a precursor of, or even a dry run at, the Jesus sacrifice, wherein the son is genuinely killed for a capricious godfather. This configuration was originally hinted at in the Gospel of Mark, with biblical scholars thereafter running with the bloody interpretation. For all the intellectualization of the theme, however, it is still about the brutal killing of the helpless to show the power of the strong.

With the forced christianization of Europe, Christian "saints" replaced old gods and goddesses, their stories twisted into new configurations to tell the new tale. The Virgin Mary came in especially handy for replacing a multitude of local goddesses, although some continued to exist side by side with the Christian Mother of God. Switching up the Bear took a little more finesse, however, to reflect new religious and ideological systems. Starting with

ancient shamanism, the process ended by pushing the Catholic St. Birgitta, for example mashing up the Celtic Brigit with the Finnish Bera to install the new guardian of the bear. Hunters turned to St. Birgitta to keep her bears under control, but it was no longer a solo act. Other saints, too, were now granted power over the bear.[125] Observing that the transition from a hunting and/or herding economy to an agricultural and urban context brought an attitudinal change toward Bear in Finnish bear-ceremonialism, anthropologist Matti Sarmela argued that agriculture turned the tide of interpretation.[126] According to Finnish botanist, Nils Isak Fellman (1841–1919), "[t]he Lapps did not consider the bear a dangerous beast at all, as the Swedish settlers did, and they did not conceive of the bear as a threat to their reindeer."[127] This leads Sarmela to conclude that bear ceremonialism in Finland moved from a rite of game renewal to one of fear management, as the Finnish mode of subsistence shifted from hunting to agriculture.[128]

Here is a take on Christianity as the patriarchal replacement of Bear-Woman spirituality coming as a direct result of the European shift to agriculture. Although often pressed, the connection between agriculture and patriarchy is hardly universal—across the North American Woodlands, large-scale agriculture flourished without all the bother of patriarchy's being installed as a result[129]—so we are looking at a development particular to Indo-European cultures. (I do not pretend to describe the motives behind China's agricultural development.) Before the Christian invasion, pre-Christian Eastern Europe was clearly a goddess-oriented yet agricultural space.[130] In fact, across Europe, grain was entirely in the hands of the goddess figure.[131] Crushing the Sampo (grain) was a prime duty of Louhi, spoken of in the very first rune of the *Kalevala*.[132] Thus, the widespread rumor that patriarchy came in with settlement agriculture is simply proving not to hold any truth, at least not the whole truth. What the appeal of patriarchy was must be sought elsewhere.

Barbara Alice Mann suggests that it came in the woman-blaming following the disastrous comet swarm and its nuclear winter.[133] None of the old chants, artifacts, or ways saved the people from the cold or from the new violence visited on animals and weak humans by strong male humans. We are back to the scarcity mindset in the development of bronze weaponry. I suspect that fear of animals began with hunting, as not wishing to be hunted, the animals defended themselves. It is not accidental that, in Indigenous America, where the Original Instructions were followed to the letter, the first European invaders into areas new to them (if old to the Indigenous peoples) were stunned to find that "the game was tame."[134] It was patriarchal hunters,

such as the Swedes whom Fellman cited, who feared animals and, in return, made the animals fearsome.

Perhaps the most grimly amusing part of this cultural changeover is that the ones who are most afraid are the patriarchs. When the game is tame, it is because the animals do not fear the human presence. When the game is dangerous, it is because animals are now prey, to be run down by humans and their animal allies, including dogs, hawks, and horses. The patriarchal medieval hunt was a blood sport of some astounding complexity as organized against some poor, targeted animal such as a stag to be run to ground. A whole succession of fresh dogs waited for their timed released, in order by breed, with "epic dogs" in the hunt individualized, receiving names and identities as a reward for their collaboration.[135] This behavior passed into warfare, as real, live dogs of war. During the Spanish invasion of Panama, Leoncico, the war dog of Vasco Núñez de Balboa, was acclaimed for ripping the head off a Panamanian chief.[136]

Modern research has shown that animals have organized emotional responses, and that they can think logically. In particular, mammals experience consciousness, "emotional feeling states," in response to their experiences.[137] Rats laugh.[138] Animals remember things, and jays have been shown to have cache memories.[139] This seems to be news only to Western Christian Europeans, who have been weaned on Genesis 1:26: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'" Missing the plural (us, our)—or pretending that these were editorial "we's"—Western Christians have pressed the belief that they are empowered by this myth to do anything they felt like doing to any animal at any time. Insects and arachnids stood no chance. This bedlam fell heavily on Bear. He went from formative to the cosmic order to Thursday's dinner, and with him went his wife, the Cosmic Mother of us all.

This is hardly a new insight, but it is an oft-ignored one that Western women have been colonized, even as they are benefiting members of the colonizing cultures.[140] So much of digitized culture is performative these days, that virtue signaling runs wild, giving ethics a bad name, in its quick-and-dirty grab for social status.[141] However, there is such a thing as having earned the right to press an ethical point, as have practitioners of *väki*. The German psychotherapist and scholar Jürgen Kremer, who practices in the United States and specializes in Indigenous knowledge, reminds us that we are not locked into the culture of our birth. Westerners can simply decide to

become bad subjects of patriarchy, thereby allying with the peoples whose voices patriarchy has worked hard to silence or even erase.

Indeed, we need not embrace the petro-patriarchal race to scarcity and environmental devastation as our planetary resources diminish in the wake of climate change, war, and epidemics. Kremer argues that the evolutionary trajectory of the so-called civilizing process is best labeled as "dissociative schismogenesis," or creating division so as not to see what evil one has wrought.[142] Building on that insight, he contends that those of Western "European descent," or in fact, any who have become Euro-centered in their "consciousness," are split away from any anchor of place, ancestry, and the natural world, its cycles and seasons. The result has been to move dissociatively from the sharing of oral tradition, which is necessarily accomplished in the immediate presence of community, to "writing civilization," which is necessarily a solitary undertaking. In its loneliness, it loses the "immanent presence" of the spirit world in suppositions of detached "transcendence" of their god or gods.[143]

The first thing to do is reconsider is the nature of spiritual authority. Bear, Birth, Water, and the Moon goddess existed at a time when spirituality was cosmic yet communal, accessible to all without the intermediary of male authorities and priests. Town-wide rituals meant that people drew mutually on the energies of the universe to create harmony, through a sense of interdependency as part of (not separate from) the cosmos. In a sort of quest for equal time, I have focused in my chapters on women, but men also held power, not the least through the Bear marriage. The Bear husband was, after all, male. He chose to marry. He chose to die in hibernation. He chose to resurrect in the spring. That is power equal to a woman's growing new life in her own body.

I see the symbolism of the bear and woman as a reflection of the gift imaginary. Birth and life and renewal are gifts, and these are, as Marija Gimbutas noted in 1989, the "main theme of Goddess symbolism." Moreover, they are self-replicating, from a "single source," interpreted as a unified goddess, in her many permutations.[144] Again and again, we see the Woman-Bear marriage as a reflection of gift imaginaries, whose symbols provide useful tools for interpreting their stories, primarily of the naturally regenerative powers: the Greek Athena, Hera, Artemis, Hecate; Roman Minerva and Diana; Irish Morrigan and Brigit; Baltic Laima and Ragana; Russian Baba Yaga; and Basque Mari. These are not "Venuses" bringing male sexual pleasure and prosperity but life-givers and death-wielders, "queens" who remained in individuals creeds for a very long time after their official dethronement or hybridization with Indo-European heavenly brides and wives.[145]

In 2020, Annine Van der Meer focused on the "Venus evidence" of archaic gift cultures that demonstrate the existence of "motherland cultures" of high antiquity. Updating the work of Gimbutas, she traced ancient female figurines not just in Old Europe but worldwide, showing how ubiquitous goddess cultures were in the world. One might never know this, given how little space has been devoted to a sacral, spiritual interpretation of ancient the female figurines, yet in all cases, Van der Meer found that "mother stands at the beginning," not father. (See Figs. 4.5 and 4.6.)

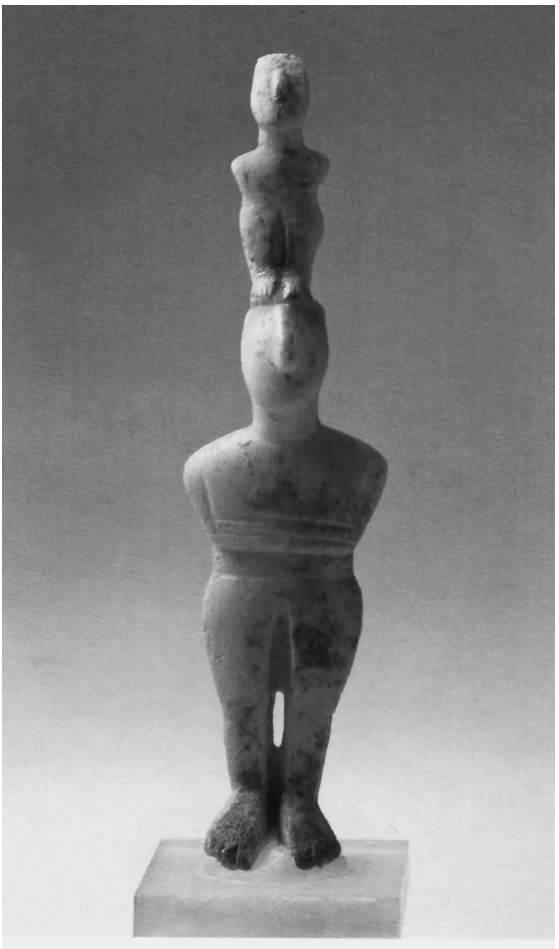

Figure 4.5 Mother and daughter figurine. Cyclades, ca. 2700–2400 BCE.

Source: Annine Van der Meer, *The Language of Ma, the Primal Mother: The Evolution of the Female Image in 40,000 Years of Global Venus Art* (Haag: PanSophia Press, 2013), 267, picture l.23. Courtesy of Annine Van der Meer.

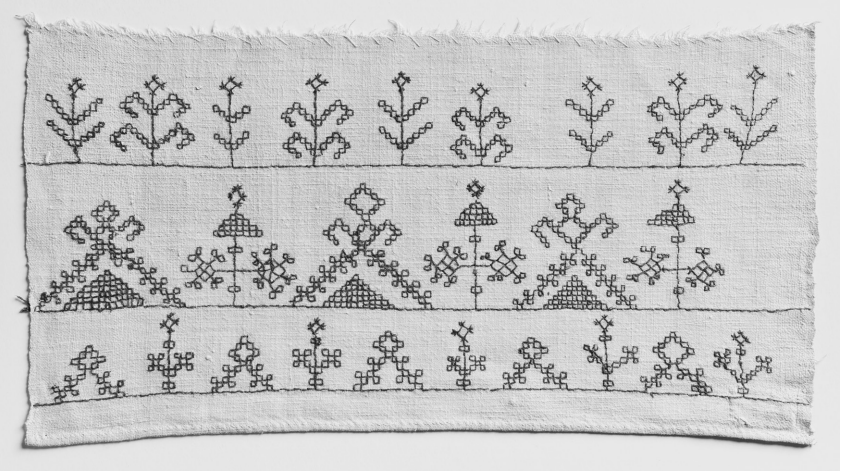

Figure 4.6 The Golden Woman in her manifestations as a tree or a woman is common in northern handicrafts, seen in this linen pattern, held by the National Museum of Finland, Helsinki.

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It was the mother figurine that stood as the "protective spirits of home and hearth, of the clan, the tribe, the nation," explaining why descent was counted through the mother.[146] Aside from just being insulting, the old patriarchal contention that matrilineage was because "no one knew who father was" is completely undercut by the marriage to Bear. He conjoined with women to pass on his prowess, and *everyone* knew who the father was.[147]

In Iceland, it has long been known, if not admitted or recognized sufficiently, that the peaceful and egalitarian Vanir people were subjugated and incorporated by the patriarchal Aesir, as reflected in Norse sagas. Before then, Vanir female spirits wove the "moon beams and sun beams" into time. The recurrent ornaments and symbols in textiles and in fragments reflect the continuum of goddess and life-oriented cultures, with bear featured in them as a symbol of spiritual power.[148] In Siberia, the oldest graves of shamans thus far excavated date between 1700 and 100 BCE, and the earliest skeleton found is that of a young woman wearing two anthropomorphic mammoth-bone figures on her apron. These carvings were attached to her clothing where shamans today among the Yakut, Ket, and Chukchi place carved antler and whalebone icons that personify their guardian spirits.[149] Like the Vanir weaving moonbeams, all women wove goddess *väki* into their textiles. Some

cloths include figures with upraised hands, echoing the stances of Neolithic Russian goddess figurines, whose "image protected them, fertilized their crops, and sanctified" anyone wearing the cloth.[150] It is in the linen and textiles that I have now recovered many of the bear symbols of the ancient world as they connect with the Golden Woman.[151] Women can still weave.

The second thing is to do is widen our field of vision. Bear marriage is clearly much more than an ecological contract of interdependency. The veiling of the gaze between women and bears (a symbol of the change of attitudes toward women and nature) can be lifted through fictional, literary, visual, and theoretical perspectives. Instead of the abstract, detached, and one-dimensional format currently used in academia, research can be holistic. Knowledge comes to us from all our senses, after all, despite the fact that only sight is valued in academia. Originally, people involved all of their senses, as we may do again. As an example of my effort to reach other dimensions through multiple senses, I illustrate my books with quilt art, taking up the ancient creative arts of sewing. I recall that, whereas male heroes in the Finnish epic might create technologically with Thor's ax and hammer, women create with the distaff using thread and balls of wool to weave the universe into being.

To early humans going back to the ice ages before and following the Younger Dryas, I suspect that hibernation looked a lot like death—yet Bear woke up from his little death, suggesting that we, too, might return from our long sleep. This is the firstling of a religious interpretation of death that suggests a strong reason for coupling with Bear, to share in his astounding capacity. Taking part in waking up the bear in the spring explains the female symbolism of hybrid artifacts in which the Bear Mother and goddess by far outweigh any tradition centering a father in ritual action. In fact, there is really "no trace of a father figure in any of the Paleolithic periods."[152] This matters. This is important. The ancient bear religion contains and transmits a vital logic that is undeniably maternal. From the bear's den arises the great mystery to which these temenos-like spaces give rise: rebirth precedes any male-oriented or patriarchal belief system of father-son and their one-life beliefs, even in the pagan eras before Christianity.

Furthermore, we can all ditch the stultifying suffocation of the "Angel of the House," and the hobbling prescriptions of the cult of true womanhood, portraying women as hand-wringing, ineffectual guardians of frivolous nothings.[153] Women in the Bear marriage show their ferocious face when deprived of their own choices. They might sleep in a cave but never

in a box. Women need stories that role-model female rage, even as we trust that women will not run amok from it or wreak havoc like war-crazed men. Armenian tales of the Bear marriage reveal women who flee from patriarchy, but instead of running with wolves, they run with bears. Knowing this is empowering for women who refuse to assimilate into patriarchy. Green lovers, Bear wives, represent the communion with other species that animates feasible ecology.

Finally, I wish to infuse the Original Instructions of the bear story into modern-day feminist debates, in which, sadly, I see no such topic or concept as Bear or his Original Instructions. In Europe, there are rarely complaints about the missing feminine divine, although such a thought is slowly beginning to dawn on Finnish feminists. By contrast, North America has a strong feminist movement based on goddess studies, and the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology organizes vibrant conferences to provide a space for women-centered ideals. Even there, however, Bear spirituality is not of any particular concern—yet it should be. I see Bear as located in modern women's need for the feminine divine. Bear is neither revisionary nor patriarchal in origin. Instead, Bear is rooted in something that we might call "our own." If Virginia Woolf recommended *A Room of One's Own*, then I recommend A Bear of One's Own.

I write this in full awareness that in today's debates there is no woman, there are only human beings. Returning to the serious challenges that face all of humanity and the very planet at this moment of the war, disease, and the dark clouds of climate change, a retreat to the Bear's Lair would not be a bad idea. Neither ecofeminists, nor bioneers, nor green parties, nor eco-activists, nor politicians can dismantle the master's house with the master's tools, to paraphrase Audre Lorde.[154] That will take new eco-philosophical thought systems. Bear values can put an end to our current planetary crises, for to become Bear is to enter the safety of the womb-cave, where one must attune herself to the energies of the Eternal Mother, and receive nourishment from the placenta of the Great Void. To Descartes, let me say: I growl; therefore I am.

In the course of history, as part of the hierarchical, dualistic, patriarchal world order, both bears and women came to be objectified with an ensuing imbalance in gender and human-to-animal relations. Under the Original Instructions that Bear transmitted to the woman, and through the Great Mother, to the hunters, Bear and Mother demanded respect. Were it not forthcoming, they simply would not yield game to the hunters. This was a

sort of "godhead," but it was communal, not hierarchical or authoritarian. Thus, the kind of obedience required was not blind, but informed and ultimately, consensual, whereas that required before the new patriarchal godhead revolved around one message that was mind-controlled to the point of obsession, both for the "god" and for his (*sic*) rank-and-file worshipers. People were no longer to listen to the ethics of their own inner spirit world, but to the singular message imposed by church authorities, who now must mediate between them and the divine. Whereas it was common sense for goddess worshipers to respect the laws of interdependence, "giving back" to nature, lest life on earth be jeopardized, under patriarchy, the good of all was no longer the individual's concern. Communalism died as competition to be The One required blind obeisance to the preachings of unquestionable authorities.

Under this new schema, "divine" rules are not about resurrecting from hibernation but about a flimsy promise of life after death, with punishment and retribution in both the here and now *and* in the afterworld. Outrageously enough, these concepts are stuffed into the mouth of Bear. However, Bear and Mother worship is about the here and now, and their rules of obedience are grounded. Patriarchal religious beliefs require a leap of faith, a blind trust in the transcendental reality of what the churchmen preach. Under matriarchy, however, the divine is immanent, present, and in front of our eyes. What we see is what we get. The Goddess lives in lakes, seas, trees, bushes, mountains, rivers; she is the principle of the life force that needs to be respected and renewed so that the planet fares well. The focus is not on the hereafter but on the here and now.

Conclusion

Retrieval

In 1953, Lesley Poles Hartley opened his novel *The Go-Between* with this grabber: "The past is a different country: they do things differently there."[1]

This becomes only more true as the past deepens into antiquity. The first thing obscured by the distance of time is the cultural frame of reference, so that retrieval's first task is to recognize when we have entered the twilight zone, where context must be pieced back together. Retrieval's second task is to understand that confusion will reign at its epicenter, the space that once shaped "common knowledge"—meaning all those things that were too obvious to detail in their day. The void where "common knowledge" sat is where our work begins.

In many stories, a woman is out in the woods berry-picking when she steps in bear excrement and curses the bear, thereby insulting him. Crucially, there are no traditions of men stepping in bear excrement and insulting the bear. There are a couple of ways to interpret who steps in what. On the one hand, if Bear symbolizes the natural world, then through marriage with Bear, the woman rectifies the harm that humans have done nature by kindly connecting with Bear. On the other hand, if Bear is the story's token of maleness, then it is possible to say that the woman's being "taken" by Bear embodies the patriarchal notion of "proper" male control of women, who are now the emblem of the natural world. We suggest that both interpretations apply, but sequentially: The first arising in the Upper Paleolithic, particularly the gentle Bölling–Allerød warming before the comet swarm of 12,900 BP; and the second birthing like Loviatar's "brats," in the nuclear winter that followed.

Amusingly, not just in the story of the Woman Who Married the Bear, but also in alchemy, excrement equates with "nigredo," the "stage of putrefaction" at which the "Great Work" of the alchemist begins.[2] Applied to the "meet cute" exposition of "stepping in it" (excrement), the alchemical interpretation indicates the need to eliminate unnecessary and toxic attitudes through a process of purging. Perhaps in our Bear marriage, the follow-up

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to "stepping in it" is precisely that, the purging of the anthropocentric conceit that humans harbor toward other species, leading to an improper treatment of nature. Here is where the Great Work begins, with the context of the Original Instructions regarding our interface with the natural world, of which we are but one part, as the ancients knew, although we seem to have forgotten as much during the Bronze Age.

In northern Eurasia, women have been marrying bears since time was first counted, and the counting was apparently by women's monthly periods. Among the many time counters were the ancient "Venus" figurines, including "The Lady of Laussel," a limestone carving twenty to twenty-five thousand years old found in a rock shelter in southwestern France. (See Fig. C.1.)

Bears as well as humans used rock shelters, while the Laussel carving depicts a mother figure, probably pregnant. As her left hand reaches for her vagina, her right hand holds a bison's horn with thirteen hash-marked lines on it.[3] Now, let us think hard, girls and boys: what happens by thirteens?

Figure C.1 The Venus of Laussel, a limestone bas relief of the Upper Paleolithic culture from the rock shelter of Laussel in Dordogne, France.
Source: *Popular Science Monthly* 83 (1913). Public domain.

Hint: The horn's shape resembles a crescent moon. There are thirteen moons in a year, and typically thirteen women's periods in the same year. Obviously, women's procreative function was of paramount importance to people of Laussel in 25,000 BP. It is not unlikely that women used the Laussel rock shelter as a "moon hut" or a "birthing hut" (two different things in Indigenous American lore).[4] The Lady of Laussel is typically described as faceless, but it appears to us that her head is covered with hair, suggesting the back of the head. Notably, babies are best born facing away from the mother, so that the mother and her attendants see the back of its head first. This is clearly the context of fecundity.

In North America, Bear marriage tales are obviously stuffed with more context than what is included in the traditions as "collected," and once more, they are overlapping contexts. Consequently, stories represent the nexus of multiple, vital, yet tattered meanings, about women, about bears, about childbirth, about hunting, about Giants, about cannibalism, about continuance. These tales need to be sorted into before and after piles: the pleasant Bölling–Allerød warming before the sky went crazy, and the Younger Dryas deep freeze, after the stars fell. It is clear that the context of the Bölling–Allerød contorted, once the Younger Dryas set in, making hardship the only certainty and premature death its likely conclusion. Once the stars fell, people in North America were contending with a signal "drop in human population."[5] Surviving its thousand-year winter required any number of cautionary tales setting up signposts about in-groups to be trusted, out-groups to be avoided, and the moralities of food, hunting, and reproduction.

Again we turn to American linguist and anthropologist Edward Sapir, who noted that the antiquity of any concept could be measured by two criteria: first, the frequency with which it popped up in the lore using stylized conventions as contextual shortcuts; and, second, the geographical spread enjoyed by the idea.[6] The more frequent the mention, the more stylized the expression, and the wider the geographical spread, the older a concept had to be. By this likely measure, the Woman Who Married the Bear is as ancient as human consciousness. It is not incidental to analysis, then, that Bear-marriage-cub-hunting stories pop up frequently, that they involve highly stylized expressions, and that they encircle the global North, intertwining hominid women with bright contexts of procreation, time-keeping, group giving, and bears, all darkened by ominous contexts of hunting, killing, cannibalism, power, and individualized possession.

Here, then, with hands shading the eyes to filter out the glare of modernity, is what we descry in the distant past.

Stepping in—and out—of "It": Barbara Alice Mann (She Who Regularly Steps in It)

The Cherokee say that bears and humans were once the same people, till the Bears decided to "leave their kindred and go into the forest." Although the rest of the Cherokee followed behind for a bit, attempting to dissuade them from leaving, the Bears were "determined to go," assuring their "relatives" that it was for the good of the Cherokee. In parting, the Bears gave the Cherokee their songs.[7]

To date, such tales have been "patronized" as "legend" or relegated to the "just-so" story bin by Western ethnography.[8] Instead, we should ask, who were all these Bears who had valuable—and mutually singable—medicine songs? Given the crossover of Bear and/or Giant husbands in North America, I suspect that Bear/Giant/marriage tales started being conflated during the Clovis period. The crossover was intensified by the comet swarm of 12,900, the nearly thousand-year winter of the Younger Dryas, the concomitant drop in human population, and the crisis of survival following. Cultural stories do take on fresh meaning under new and stressful circumstances.

First, I suspect that the Bear husband goes back to before human-style hominins had entirely slimmed down to just *Homo sapiens sapiens*. The critter giving rise to all those pesky hominins separated from her archaic ancestor 1.4 million to 900,000 years ago, with Denisovan groups forming one million to 800,000 BP. Genetically, human and Neanderthal populations, both stemming from the Denisovan groups, are thought to have parted company 770,000 to 550,000 years ago. As recently as 54,000–49,000 years ago, modern humans and Neanderthals were dating and mating, and even more recently, 49,000–44,000 years ago, humans and Denisovans were doing the same.[9] There was, moreover, admixture from "ghost population(s)," not yet identified.[10] Their introgressions mated, too.[11] Studies suggest that Denisovan and Neanderthal hominins were more closely related to one another than to *Homo sapiens sapiens*.[12] There was a whole lotta of shakin' goin' on.

Second, to the antiquity of the dates above, we must add the damage done to comprehension by Western scholars' adamant allergy to the very notion of

ancient habitation of the Americas.[13] From the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries, Western hubris presumed to *correct* the supposed error of the Indigenous American claim to deep antiquity in the Americas, with a palpable ban on exploring it. Echoing his peers in 1901, famed anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber solemnly warned his readers not to trust the "authority of the Indians" regarding their origins. It was "absolutely valueless," he decreed, because Indigenous Americans "almost completely" lacked any "historical sense or knowledge."[14] The powerful director of the Smithsonian from 1903 to 1942, Aleš Hrdlička, agreed, asserting in all seriousness that Indigenous peoples had only just arrived in America, say, three thousand years before the Europeans (that is, hardly enough time to lay claim to the land).[15] Hrdlička and his minions actively quashed contrary evidence, making any mention of a deep Indigenous tenure in the Americas "virtually taboo," a prohibition lasting almost throughout the twentieth century.[16]

Vexatious Native American claims to having been in the Americas FOR–EV–ER persisted, nonetheless, and these claims are now being borne out by modern DNA studies. The Clovis culture first showed up to induce heartburn in archaeologists, who grumpily dated it to 13,000 BP.[17] Then, much older habitation sites turned up. The oldest site now *acknowledged* by Euro-scholars is Monte Verde in Chile, which looks as if it might date back as far as thirty thousand years.[18] There are, however, older sites in the Americas that are still raising a firestorm of claims, counterclaims, and related fury. For instance, although a pre-Clovis site found in 1998 on the Savannah River in Allendale County, South Carolina, was dated to 50,000 BP in 2009, the Western archaeological establishment continues to look askance of it.[19] Whether the original 1981 dating of 250,000 BP for the tool manufactory site discovered at Valsequillo, Mexico, or the cut bones plus stone tools found at Toca de Esperanca, Brazil, put at 300,000 BP in a uranium-thorium test in 1988, can stand, the alternative dates proposed are still pre–Younger Dryas, and by respectable margins.[20] Moreover, modern DNA studies show that Indigenous American groups actually did, as claimed, arrive in one place and then pretty much stay there in deep antiquity.[21]

If in Hrdlička's day, resistance to Indigenous American antiquity had to do with establishing the Euro-invaders' "right" to take the Americas, then today it is mostly about the implications of the intermingling of Denisovan, Neanderthal, and *Homo sapiens sapiens* outside of Eurasia. If accepted, Indigenous American antiquity would upend a couple centuries' worth of the paleo-archaeological apple cart, so the resistance is really about the challenge

to the West's historical core identity as the sole arbiter of scientific truth, here about human evolution.[22] When unacknowledged emotion like this is at hand, evidence matters very little. I have long suspected the foot-dragging has something to do with the fact that the very early dates precede the extinction of not one but two competing varieties of hominin. The thought of interbreeding in the Americas in 50,000 BP gives Western paleontologists a collective tummy ache.

Then there is the single migration theory of the peopling the Americas. Originally, geneticist David Reich went along with the old assumptions of a unified, original population in the Americas, to the point that he named this supposedly foundational group the "First Americans."[23] Clovis was originally depicted as stomping doggedly across the Beringian ice, following the megafaunal "herds." Alas, to arrive in the North American interior from Siberia, they had to summit twelve mountain ranges.[24] Once it was realized that the megafauna were not known for glacial mountain-climbing, let alone for an ice-based diet, a fancifully ice-free "interglacier corridor" was added to the Beringian tradition.[25] Both propositions were refuted by Indigenous scholars from the get-go, not only because such a corridor matches no extant tradition but also because, well, it is just, plain daffy.[26] The corridor is now beginning to crumble under even Western scrutiny, leaving it unclear how the Clovis people (and, presumably, the megafauna) came in, although a coastal route is now tentatively proposed by Westerners.[27]

To the surprise of Western scientists, genetic testing later showed a second, more ancient Indigenous population than the ice-stomping "First Americans." Those older folks are situated in Amazonia. Yep. There were two, distinct populations in the Americas.[28] Worse, the Amazonian groups were connected with a non-Siberian Denisovan group related to populations in Australia, Papua New Guinea, and the Andaman Islands, none anywhere near "Beringia."[29] Oops. David Reich dubbed this unexpected group "Population Y" and now theorizes that it was once "broadly distributed" but became "marginalized by the expansion of other groups."[30] This Y population has a relatively high level of human-Denisovan ancestry, as opposed to Reich's "First Americans," whose DNA leans toward the human-Neanderthal admixture most often found today.[31] The Y population is considered a "ghost" people, whose existence must be inferred from genetic clues in other Indigenous American populations.[32] There are probably yet other "ghost" groups out there, but just to ensure that everyone stays confused, the late-coming human-Neanderthal "Clovis" folks are still called "First Americans."

Because the wildly irresponsible genetic studies of Indigenous Americans during the twentieth century have "caused major harm" to Native Americans, most Indigenous groups are now extremely leery of cooperating with any new DNA studies.[33] Those recent studies of Indigenous American ancestry that have been performed, however, winnow through the DNA found in modern populations to extrapolate ancient traits.[34] One study found that the propensity to Type 2 diabetes in Indigenous Americans derives from a Neanderthal inheritance.[35] Other studies indicate that Neanderthals were taller than previously thought, and probably taller than other Paleolithic humans.[36] Thus, height as well as a susceptibility to Type 2 diabetes might have been passed along with Neanderthal DNA as newcomers poured into the Americas with the megafauna, before the stars fell.

Alas for Kroeber, these DNA findings lend weight to Indigenous American claims to know their own history. Traditions show original groups already here and a new group coming in from the north and far west with the megafauna. Traditions also claim not just one but multiple Y populations. For instance, the Cheyenne say that, in the very earliest days, *three* distinct groups inhabited the Americas. Not only themselves, but also a "hairy people" and a third group, the "bearded people," coexisted with them. The bearded people soon went north and were never seen again.[37] The Diné also spoke of a group, recorded as the "Americans," who went east, never to be heard from again.[38] Meantime, the Cheyenne went south with the shy, hairy people, who lived in caves and went about naked, even after the Cheyenne clothed themselves. The hairy ones also made pottery as well as beds of leaves and skins. They had and used flint tools. When the Cheyenne returned north, the hairy people remained in the south, so that the two peoples lost track of each other.[39] Métis tradition adds that these "hairy people" were quite short and "hairier than a skunk."[40] These sound like descriptions of the various hominin populations forty thousand—or fifty thousand—years ago.

Population surprises are further complicated by Neanderthal's hyoid bone, whose structures were similar to the hyoid of humans, with speech and auditory capacities likely analogous to those of humans.[41] Since the Neanderthal hyoid bone was found in 1983, there has been much debate over what Neanderthal speech sounded like, not a little because the structure of the soft palate and upper respiratory tract, differing from modern human structures, would have impacted Neanderthal vocalizations.[42] Archaeologist David W. Anthony notes that, historically, linguistic chauvinism contributes to violent impulses and interpretations among human populations.[43] In the

competition of the Younger Dryas, this would have been exacerbated by survivalism.

Recently, DNA studies have also told us about the unique appearance of Neanderthals—for instance, the likelihood of "red hair" and "pale skin"—as well as the alleles that contribute to brain structures essential to speech. Beyond their high-altitude adaptations and excellent sense of smell, Denisovan characteristics are still being defined, but their very large molars might also have impacted vocalization.[44] In both Neanderthal and Denisovan populations, the "genes related to speech" were "depleted," that is, not present for analysis, so that hard conclusions could not be drawn, but in light of Indigenous traditions, the possibilities are intriguing.[45] This is especially true given that there is some evidence that speech had been evolving since *Homo erectus*, everyone's granddaddy.[46]

It is hard today to know what the "growl" of a Stone Giant sounded like, for it was last heard in that other country of Hartley's, one frozen over by a thousand-year winter. However, the oft-reported yet strangely comprehensible "growling" of Bear husbands might yield clues as to what varying hyoids and high or low, wide or narrow palatoglossal arches allowed as speech. Even if speech did not exist or, if it did, was not mutually intelligible, there is still no reason to suppose that imagination did not exist or did not yield to extant populations stories about one another. In fact, there is no reason at all to suppose that spoken language, mutually intelligible or otherwise, is even required for ritual, performativity, or story conception.[47] (My cat has a ritualized "story" about dinner time, and she strictly enforces it.)

Given the Neanderthal–Denisovan–Y population–human intermixing, there had to have been some sort of communication, but nobody knows what the bouncing baby Neanderhuman, Denisoman, or any other inflection of the varieties looked or sounded like—let alone what the products of their intermingled introgressions looked or sounded like. Besides, as David Reich notes, appearance is a meaningless indicator, or rather, it can mean anything an observer wants it to mean.[48] For example, despite all their "extraordinary physical difference," the "vast majority" of living Indigenous Americans came from Reich's late-coming, "First American" influx, with distinctions subsequently arising due to "diet and environment," along with "random changes."[49] Diet, environment, and random changes were factors 50,000–30,000 BP, too.

Extraordinary height, also present in a bear on two feet, might have conflated the original content of Bear marriage tales with new Giant

contexts. Indeed, in Paleolithic America, physical stature might well have acted as a "racial" marker, something like skin tone does today. Beyond the ubiquitous mention of the unusual height of the Stone Giants, we have little other indication of what caught the Paleolithic eye. Tradition tells us that the Giants came in from the "far west" and were "twice as tall" as regular people (without specifying how tall regular people were).[50] Giants abducted women and forced them into sexual relations.[51] Almost certainly, these facts altered the Bear marriage stories to include the forcible seizing of women, a new wrinkle entering the stories during this period.

I suspect that the seizure and rape of Indigenous women by Stone Giants might connect to restricted mating opportunities. Evidence of incest among Neanderthals at Altai, Siberia, exist in the parents of one set of remains who were clearly half-siblings.[52] It is unknown whether incestuous inbreeding was a consistent pattern among the Giants of North America, a pattern shared by all hominids during the Younger Dryas, or not a pattern at all, but a recent study of 1,785 ancient remains coming forward in time from the last forty-five thousand years suggests that the smaller and more isolated a population, the greater the pressure to mate within its group. In the ancient Americas, samples from 13,000 BP showed the world's highest sustained rate of co-relatedness.[53] No doubt, some genetic bottlenecks resulted, which might help explain the remarkable looks (aside from height) reported for the Giants, from their red hair and extra teeth to their webbed digits, pointy hands (perhaps a result of webbing), and frequent polydactyly.[54]

Numerous settler records of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cave and mound burials reported very tall skeletons, sometimes reaching more than seven feet in height.[55] They were almost all male. If the "giants" were some sort of advance raiding party among Reich's late-coming, "First American" émigrés, then they might have been something like the imperious, male conquistadors who invaded the Caribbean after 1492, kidnapping, raping, and sadistically abusing Indigenous women and children.[56] Spaniards used Indigenous children as dog food, among other unsavory habits, while the ancient Giants ordered women they had impregnated to kill the unwanted among their children (presumably for lacking Giant traits).[57]

Getting rid of out-group children might have been a commonly shared behavior. If children born with Giant traits generally stood to be killed among the shorties, then captured adult Giants were commonly burned to death.[58] Similarly, in the Nakota story, a rescued mother was forced to kill her Giant-descended son.[59] Thus, it was probably not incidental that, after being

forced to murder her Giant-descended son, the Nakota mother, herself, was burned alive.[60] Together, these stories suggest strong intergroup hostilities, with height at the time acting as the flash point that skin color does in North America today, with the shorties giving as good as they got.

Tradition depicts the Giants as coveting their height and holding themselves superior to diminutive humans. Self-selecting for height would certainly have compounded their appearance of difference. In a tale recorded circa 1750, the Cherokee called the Giants, *Tsunilkalu*, the "Slant-Eyed People," saying that they had come in from the far western portion of North America.[61] The *Tsunilkalu* were named for a specific Giant, *Tsulkalu*, Slant-Eye, who lived in a mountain nearby, hoarding the game, as in the Jicarilla Apache tale of Raven, outwitted by the Dog Man.[62] *Tsulkalu* produced a child with a local woman, the two of them absconding west after the wife's mother rejected the child, no doubt for its Giant traits. When the wife's clan brothers tracked her down to the mountain cavern in which she lived with *Tsulkalu*, she refused them admittance, offering them a freshly killed deer to stay away. One brother made it inside, however, where the interior seemed to him like a "great townhouse."[63] So far, then, *Tsulkalu* sounds like a standard Bear marriage tale, but the groom is clearly presented as a Giant, not a Bear, and the couple lived on, together. Indeed, the wife had been thrown away by her mother, who did not like the Giant admixture entering her lineage. Perhaps the wife refused to return with her brothers for fear of being forced to kill her child, being burned alive, or both. Perhaps she even loved *Tsulkalu*.

Other than height, we hear of the dress of Giants. A Pawnee tradition foregrounds a "strange-looking" man who always wore red paint, a robe across his shoulders, and "bears' claws about his neck." He dug himself a "hole." By now, anyone Indigenous listening to this tradition was feeling antsy, anticipating the clincher: "He was a Bear-Man." When the people tried to chase the Bear man, he turned into a bear entirely, although he became afraid of the people once they came at him with torches, causing him to leave them alone thereafter.[64] A few things are arresting, here. First, the Bear man went back and forth between being a man and being a Bear, as happens specifically in Giant stories.[65] Second, the Bear man could and did experience fear, specifically of fire. Third, the Bear man dug a deep hole, in this instance, to deposit a Pawnee boy in it.

The first two behaviors we have seen commonly attributed to Giants, who clearly did not look forward to immolation any more than did "rescued" women. Interestingly, the hole-digging mirrors an ancient pit replete with

mammoth tusks that archaeologists found in Tultepec, Mexico.[66] In the Pawnee tradition, however, the prey was a Pawnee boy, and the Stone Giants are frequently depicted as snacking on shorty children. Finally, the pit was to hold the boy after he had been seized, not to trap him in the first place. Archaeologists may have the cart before the horse, then, in assuming that pits were traps. They might well have been hidden storage larders, long the common use of pits by most Indigenous Americans.[67]

Clearly, known DNA admixtures 50,000–30,000 BP have left me wondering how literally we should take stories of post-Clovis Bear-mating. Before the stars fell, tales pretty symbolically related women's reproductive cycles to the seasons, as measured by bear activity on the ground and in the stars. In this sweet beforetime, references were to bears "of the old kind," the "hairless bears."[68] Now, Giants in bear suits were also hairless Bears beneath their suits, but there were also many stories of the megafauna. Among the "giants" of the Bölling–Allerød period were *Arctodus simus*—the short-faced bear, a cave-dweller that was both enormous (compared to humans) and had smooth skin with little fur. Short-faced bears died when the stars fell.

The other Bears were the *Genonsgwa*, a Seneca term for Stone Giants. They were likewise "hairless bears" often hard to see or even invisible till one was upon them—or they were upon one.[69] These came in shortly before the stars fell and remained long after the stars fell. They, too, lived in caves. During the thousand-year winter, they wore furry bear suits, although under those bear suits, their skin was as "smooth as a man's."[70] Modoc tradition states that these Bears also had fur and claws, like animal bears, but that they "walked on two feet and could talk like people."[71] This sounds as though three different kinds of "bear" are being described: two having naturally smooth, naked skin, and one naturally sporting fur. There was only one kind, however, that was naturally naked but wore furry bear suits when venturing out of his cave. Only those wearing fur—either as naturally grown or as bear suits—existed after the stars fell. This fits with the traditions that, originally, the Giants were gargantuan but later shrank to the size of the seven-foot-tall Stone Giants.[72] In chronological order, then, we have (1) *Arctodus simus*, the megafaunal short-faced bear; (2) the Stone Giants, or tall, Neanderthal-impacted introgressions first arriving in the Clovis period; and (3) the *Ursidae*, or modern bears.

It is not unlikely that hunting came in with the Stone Giants, who were always depicted as hunters, unlike the original peoples, who subsisted on "grasses."[73] Killing releases the odor of blood. Those freshly involved in the

murder of animals necessarily recognized the smell, as did those newly involved in menstruation—or, more darkly, in the murder of humans. Perhaps because of an unacknowledged social taboo in the European West, the actual impact of the smell of blood on human behavior has been little studied, unless in a socially laudable way, say, in the treatment of post-traumatic stress in ex-soldiers, who frequently allude to the odor of blood. One recent study did note, however, that blood is an "important chemosensory signal" that requires further study.[74] It found that both men and women experienced a strong response to the odor of blood, with women's response strongly negative and relative to their point in the menstrual cycle. Social cues seem to mediate people's reactions.[75] This last one is very interesting, because it suggests that what a culture defines as a "correct" or acceptable response to the odor of blood has as much impact as the actual sensory perception of blood. Conversely, a recent experiment showed that imagination and mental images of blood raised the level of aggression in computer gamesters, without the actual odor of blood involved.[76]

In terms of animal response, a 1982 study reported that the odor of male "veinous blood" had as much impact on animal behavior as did the odor of female menstrual blood.[77] Similarly, even modern hunters and soldiers report that the smell of blood excites them. Much as hunters emphasize the skills required in hunting, the fact is that the odor of blood and exposed guts adds to the thrill.[78] Thus, the odor of menstrual blood might have excited the Stone Giants, for in more than one story, the "bear" shows up to propose to a menstruating woman. Menstruation might also have triggered the "kill" instinct in women who had married Giants. For instance, in the Secwepemc ("Shuswap") tale recounted in the first chapter, the "rescued" Grizzly wife begins to menstruate just before she kills her lineage family.[79] Such ruminations might induce squirming today, but polite bourgeoise sensibilities do not mean that the response was not operative during the Younger Dryas or that we should all impersonate Hrdlička in a collective "*Shhh*" on this subject.

Because the Stone Giants regarded the shorties as snackables, humans began defending themselves, not the least by inventing the bow and flint-tipped arrow. Out stalking prey, one of the most dangerous Giants, by the Cherokee name of *Ocasta*, noticed a hunter wielding "two sticks" together (a bow and arrow). Then, the hunter did something unforeseen: he pointed one of the "sticks" (arrows) at a deer, which "fell down." This display came as an unwelcome demonstration of new weaponry, so racing to the deer,

Ocasta quickly pulled out the stick to examine its potency. Finding that the arrow was flint-tipped, *Ocasta* immediately grasped how dangerous this new weapon could be to himself, so he considered how he might protect himself against it. It occurred to him to fight fire with fire, or in this case, flint with flint, so he made himself a sort of flint-mail shirt weaving together flint chunks to fit across his chest, back, and loins.[80] We see this story more than once about Giants scrambling to protect themselves against weapons invented by clever shorties.

Invisibility is a common trait of anything more powerful than raw humanity, especially when that power is used against humanity. Thus, for instance, rivers with their floods and their rapids and their fast currents have an "invisible man" as their animating spirit.[81] Inimical to shorties, Giants are always invisible, then, with Western ethnographers deciding that invisibility was an unknowable trait of "gods" appropriate to those in the "lower stages of savagery."[82] As usual, it is good to be wary of such nineteenth-century Western interpretations as this. Although the Giants were Sky-descended and thus known for their ability to be "invisible" (perhaps one reason that death is a man with an invisible face in Iroquoian tradition), this did not make the Giants "gods."[83] When tradition said that the Giants were 'invisible," it meant that they were good at camouflage and staying alive. Consequently, one of the most interesting points of the *Ocasta* tale was that upon seeing the bow and flint-tipped arrow, *Ocasta* realized with a jolt that he was no longer "invisible," that is, that he was no longer the only dangerous one around, that he could also be killed—and from a distance, no less, negating his advantage of height.[84]

This is probably why the Cherokee White Bear story opens with the Bears meeting in what was clearly a war council: Grievances were formally aired followed by options for action. Disturbed that human hunters had been killing their "friends," eating their "flesh," and using their "skins" any way they wanted without so much as a howdy-do, the Bears decided to declare war on humans.[85] Next, they debated how to kill the hunters, deciding on "bows and arrows," the same weapons that the hunters were using to kill them. Accordingly, a Bear craftsman made a bow and arrows. When he tried to use the weapon, he was able to draw the bow and loose the arrow, but "his long claws caught the string and spoiled the shot." A second bear trimmed down his claws to try again. This time, the arrow ran true, but Chief White Bear objected, reasoning that, clawless, Bears would no longer be able to climb trees, something essential to them. The Bears discarded the bow and

arrows, therefore, deciding to stick, instead, with their long teeth and sharp claws for defense.[86]

If this tradition were really about the *Ursidae*, then it is furry, fairy-tail fun. If, however, it was about the Stone Giants, then it tells us: first, that the Giants were not the only cannibals around; second, that the original inhabitants of the Americas initiated warfare; and, third, that the invention of the flint-tipped arrow seriously threatened the Giants. Importantly, rather than adopt the bow and arrow, the Giants preferred to keep their false teeth and claw technology.

Stone Giant "bears" self-differentiated by color, most likely representing (1) clan divisions, (2) cardinal directions, and (3) their order of arrival in North America. First, to this day, the Meskwaki Bear clan is green, and its chiefs are green, an interesting fact given the Meskwaki tradition of Green Bear as the leader of senseless attacks reminiscent of Stone Giant methods.[87] Among the Brulé Sioux, by contrast, the "caretaker" originally "developed not only into one man, but into seven nations [clans] of the seven ore colors."[88] This happens across clans and nations. Second, colors as attached to directions are also commonplace but not steady: the directional colors change with the group involved. For example, the Mountain Chant of the Diné shows a cave with four sleeping Bears, their heads to directional pebbles: black (east), blue (south), yellow (west), and white (north).[89] In 2005, Warren DeBoer worked out a chart showing the directional colors of the Indigenous American quaternary, showing many of the differing, national color schemes.[90] Finally, among Indigenous Americans, it is traditional that the order in which groups arrive at any place grants elderhood (precedence) to those first arrived, with levels of younger-hood granted to those coming in later, based on their order of arrival.[91] I suspect that White Bear, Blue Bear, Green Bear, and Black Bear were first into their respective areas, assuming territorial chieftanships.

Indigenous American traditions regularly recall White Bear, Blue Bear, Green Bear, and Black Bear—but who is the Red Bear that turns up, if rarely, in traditions from the Arctic northwest? In one tale from "the lower Yukon," a Red Bear and a White Bear are clearly hominids guarding a lair, as are their sister and parents, inside. A human hunter from the far north travels a long way even farther to the north, until he comes across the residence of "very bad" people. He promptly kills its guards, a White Bear and a Red Bear, as well as the husband of the young woman within, taking her as his wife. He lives with her and her parents until, suspecting them of conspiring to do him

in, he kills his wife and quickly flees back to his home village.[92] Perhaps the most telling thing about this story is its location: the far, far north. Modern red bears, *Ursus arctos* (*isabellinus*) exist only in Asia as a subspecies of grizzlies.[93] This sounds, then, like a story of mutual distrust and violence between the peoples of Siberia and Alaska.

Throughout this story, the traveler flies into rages, so just who is *very bad* in this tale is open to some question. Supposedly, those in the white and red bear suits are its intended bad guys, whereas the sometime wife, not in a bear suit, is marriage material. With all the violence going around, let us recall that Bear wives need only put on bearskins to become stone killers deserving of death. They are shown making themselves artificial claws and bear teeth, something they already know how to do from living with Bear men.[94] We are left to wonder whether the various hominids before and during the Younger Dryas simply did not recognize each other as related beings.

Similarly, shape-shifting (from Bears to people to invisibility to color-coding) is commonplace in Bear marriage tales, as are the figurative applications of natural shapes. Melds are anything but unusual in depictions in North America, where the continent itself is seen as a swimming sea turtle.[95] Especially because Indigenous North Americans describe creatures in terms of their locomotion—two-leggeds, four-leggeds, six-leggeds, or eight-leggeds; swimmers, fliers; twirlers, and crawlers—bears fall into the two-legged as well as the four-legged category, a natural blend.[96] It is hardly surprising then, that California's petroglyphs featured bear-humans. "It is curious to note the gradual blending of forms," said a puzzled Walter Hoffman in 1891, "for instance, that of the bear with those resembling the human figure, often found among the Shoshonean types in Arizona and New Mexico."[97]

Modern bears on two feet stand seven to eight feet tall. So did the Stone Giants of tradition. Imaginatively commingling the two would not have been a leap. I think that the story of the Woman Who Married the Bear was originally about the seasons, fecundity, and procreation and that it preexisted the arrival of the Clovis Stone Giants. Once the people of multicolored lineages arrived talking in growls, wearing their bear suits, eating the non-Bear people, and abducting non-Bear women, the story of the Woman Who Married the Bear permutated into one of hunting, death, and fierce group loyalties. It is well past time for Western scholars to understand that the Indigenous American past is every bit as complex, fraught, long, and terrifying as that of every other human group.

Stepping into the Ecology of It: Kaarina Kailo (She Who Always Looks before She Steps)

Bear bespoke the Original Instructions, centered on respect for the natural world, hominins as part of that natural world, and the modeling of selflessness in the service of group survival and restoration of life with each spring.

These are worthy lessons, but alas, lessons forgotten in the present. Today, following the neoliberal fashion from around the world, Westerners persist in dogmas of efficiency, productivity, and economic growth as the fulcrum of values, the stuff of sociopolitical and economic goals. The cult of unimpeded economic growth despite the planet's dwindling resources seems impervious to common sense, even though signs of disaster loom in plain sight. The patriarchal-capitalist race to the bottom in worship of "competition" has not been challenged, not even by Covid-19, climate change, or Russian aggression against Ukraine. Russian president Vladimir Putin epitomizes the irrational strife among the world's alpha males for final victory over . . . well, *what*, exactly? To cut the branches off the Tree of Life, on which they themselves are sitting, valorizes the titanic mindset of faster, *richer*, ***bigger***—BETTER while ignoring the Bear's ecological warnings in plain sight. Self-destructive acts are so deeply anchored in some mindscapes, however, that all rational thought has disappeared into the ozone layer.

The European Union as well as the United States, with its "daylight savings time"—seventy nations in all—move the clock back and forth in the name of maximized productivity, fatally interfering like little tin gods with human rhythms and nature. It has recently been shown that atrial fibrillation picks up during the spring switchovers, when people lose sleep, and that this effect persists in women, if not in men.[98] When people everywhere from schools to work sites are pushed to their limits this way by the theology of cost-cut profits, natural human physical needs are ignored, and for a cause not even their own. The old folks of the Eurasian North reacted to the long period of darkness with their bodily intuitions, sleeping as much as their bodies required, but now we purchase lamps for artificial light to create artificial human energy, even though the three months of corresponding light periods would naturally compensate for winter sleep.

This attitude toward nature obtains in all areas. We no longer respect natural cycles but see industrially oriented, mass-produced "lifeways" imposed on everything. The mass-murder production of agribusiness is not the reality only of the animals we consume but is also the crude model that is extended

to schools and hospitals. On the basis of the ancient wisdom still carried forward by many Indigenous peoples, we know that the old folks did not cut the trees to see the forest, as we do today. They did not destroy the gifts of the ecosystem to replace them with plastic jungles in the name of money, ***money***, MONEY. They did not abuse animals as part of the agribusiness in which cows are fed their relatives until they turn into mad cows. The ancestors did not market chicken products as "free of antibiotics or toxins."

The Original Instructions made sure that humans respected the gifts of nonhuman persons—like Bear—and understood about *hau*, the spirit that connects us through the turn-taking of gifting. They realized, unlike us moderns, that treating a space or a being as sacred meant that vital water sources from rivers to springs were inviolable; that they could not be used in privatized, bottled-water businesses, which would imprison their gifts in plastic bottles that never decompose. Once exchange sublates the gift to the profit motive, however, we transgress by breaking the cosmic contract between nonhuman and human nature. Having stepped over that line, we go crazy, for we threaten not just our own lives but also the sustainability of the entire planet. Treating nature as nothing but a resource for human exploitation, we objectify ourselves and commodify the future of our children.

Our Original Instructions contained no such invalidation of the Bear Way. Far from it, there has been some evidence that ancient hominins even followed Bear into hibernation. The benefits of mammalian hibernation are pretty generally known. In particular, hibernation greatly reduces stress on cells while reducing stress on the environment for food. Lately, there has been a serious exploration of the possibility of human hibernation (primarily to facilitate space travel). From some twentieth-century tests, it appears that one of the stressors that hibernation reduces is response to radiation. Hibernating cells exhibit radio-resistance. Moreover, hibernation can greatly reduce metabolic consumption, which in turn, slows aging, a goal most of us can get behind! Interestingly enough, in 2013, scientists were able to replicate a sort of hibernation in animals that do not normally hibernate.[99]

It is mammalian animals that hibernate, and of course, humans are mammals. Scientists are intrigued by the number of cases in which modern humans survived quite low body temperatures for long periods of time, as this is suggestive of at least a vestigial ability to hibernate.[100] They believe that the "gene set" that allows for hibernation may still exist in humans in some form, and that is it only the regulator of hibernation that slid away from us.[101] Interestingly, a collection of hominin skeletal remains dating back to

500,000 BP in Sima de los Huesos, Cave Mayor, in Atapuerca, Spain, showed indications of hominin hibernation.[102] In fact, hibernating bears seemed to have been cohabiting with the hibernating humans, suggesting that both "developed a similar adaptation to hibernation during glaciation," to survive the desperate cold and food shortages of the environment.[103]

These exciting discoveries hint at evolutionary situations far more profound than simple metaphor, allegory, or feminist flights of fantasy about the Woman Who Married the Bear. They strongly suggest, instead, that Bear marriage had to do with mutuality for survival. It also suggests a mindset allowing community to include more of nature than just critters that look human. Stories of animal domestication present dogs as having been the "first" species tamed by humans, but dogs' interface with humans has been traced back only to 12,000 BP, or right around the time of the comet swarm.[104] Based on this newest evidence from Spain, however, it appears that bears domesticated hominins, or at least, allowed them to cohabit with them, half a million years ago. I find it not unlikely that food-sharing was involved. All the tales of women sucking on the paw pads of hibernating bears to survive the long winter might have derived from ancient cultural memories of licking the paws of sleeping bears, scavenging for leftovers from the bear's old last meal before he went to sleep.[105]Although the question of whether early humans were hunters or scavengers has yet to be settled in science, the fact is that hominins were small, not very strong (compared to predatory animals), and at best, heaved stones. Whereas predators move around at night, humans sleep at night—a prey habit. How likely is it, really, that humans brought down mammoths? An elegant argument posits that humans scavenged kill remains abandoned by the large predators, breaking open abandoned long bones to suck out the marrow.[106] This scenario seems much more likely than what Barbara Alice Mann dubs the Mighty Hunter Myth, featuring Fearless Brunchman, who bags well-tusked and highly horned animals four times his size. Predators have fairly powerful mandibles, but hominin development shows the mandible shrinking, strongly suggesting a soft-food, high-energy diet.[107] If ancient humans were known to extract marrow from abandoned kills, then modern human grocery-store scavengers prefer fatty foods, which brings us back to paw-sucking women.[108]

Human genes for hibernation might now be vitiated, but the collective memory of sleeping with bears never dissipated in the global North. Caves offered shelter from hailstones of iron that pelted the people—all the people, including animals, insects, trees, and rocks. More generous than me-first

moderns, Bear did not view humans as predators or rivals so much as pesky couch surfers who licked their paws clean. Bears and humans seem to have had a symbiotic relationship, transporting us back to an era of women's appreciation of the life-oriented events of rebirth and regeneration, which no doubt constituted what we lip-serve today as "ecosocially sustainable behavior."

The bestselling author of works on nature and our place in it Peter Wohlleben provides a convincing example of the interconnected nature of animal and other forms of life in *The Hidden Life of Trees*. There he tells the story of the disappearance from, and return of, wolves to Yellowstone, Wyoming, which was declared the United States' first national park in 1925. Having destroyed wolves in Europe, starting around 1600 CE in North America, Euro-Americans initiated a centuries-long push to destroy all the wolves there, too. They even put "scalp bounties" on wolves, as they had put them on Indigenous Americans.[109] Once the wolves disappeared, the "entire ecosystem changed," Wohlleben reports. Now absent the necessary balance of Brother Wolf, elk embarked on ever-increasing their herds, overwhelming the vegetal substance of their areas. Animals that depended on the trees died or departed. Starting in the 1990s, wolves began to repopulate, feasting on the overly large elk herds. Then, miracle of miracles, the trees returned, and the small animals dependent on trees returned. "The wolves turned out to be better stewards of the land than people," quipped Wohlleben.[110] I say that is because Wolf remembers the Original Instructions.

Shortsighted commercial purposes fail to consider the interdependencies of the ecosystem. Wohlleben hopes that the wolves' stewardship of natural processes in Yellowstone will help people appreciate the complex ways in which trees interact with their environment, how human interactions with forests affect tree success, and the role that forests play in making our world the kind of place where humans want to live. Apart from that, in alignment with Bear women and ecopsychologists long before him, Wohlleben claims that "forests hide wonders that we are only just beginning to explore."[111] He invites his reader to look at how trees connect with one another through the "networks" of their root systems: "Scientists in the Harz mountains in Germany have discovered that this really is a case of interdependence," as trees communicate with each other through the proximity of their roots. "It appears that nutrient exchange and helping neighbors in times of need is the rule," the scientists found. The inescapable conclusion is that "forests are superorganisms with interconnections much like ant colonies."[112] They even

have a social structure of sorts, through "degrees of connection—or maybe even affection—that decides how helpful a tree's colleagues will be."[113]

Suzanne Simard helped to discover that trees have maternal instincts. They are even matriarchal: mother trees are the dominant trees, widely linked to other trees in the forest through their fungal-root connections.[114] These trees pass their legacy onto the next generation and exert their influence in the upbringing of the youngsters. "My" small beech trees, which have by now been growing for at least eighty years, are standing under mother trees that are about two hundred years old—the equivalent of forty-year-olds in the "wood wide web" of our forests. What and how much information is exchanged among them are subjects we have only just begun to research. For instance, Simard discovered that different tree species are in contact with one another, even when they regard each other as competitors.[115] This is only news to "moderns." The Woman Who Married the Bear knew as much, and so did Bear, which is why they had a standing date in the woods. Extant "Stone Age" people living even today—that is, fully modern humans who happen to embrace the organic rather than the mechanistic view of nature—see phenomena in nature that defy the expectations of the urban Joe Blow.

Flawed assumptions about transactional exchange have been projected onto nature. In 1984, plant biologist Barbara McClintock (1902–1992) challenged the supposition that everything functions on the basis of a competitive exchange for personal gain.[116] Her "thoughtful cell" approach showed that, in fact, there are numerous organisms that cooperate rather than compete, dashing the crude Victorian proposition that survival of the fittest applied across species and nature.[117] Wohlleben writes that "fungi are pursuing their own agendas," preferring "conciliation and equitable distribution of information and resources."[118] Thus, if we want to use forests as a weapon in the fight against climate change, then we must allow them to grow old, which is exactly what large conservation groups are asking us to do.[119]

Ascribing human features to ecosystems is nothing new and, in fact, nothing to be dismissed as androcentric or childish, let alone irrational. We do not know how trees sense, feel, and communicate, except by indirect observation of the kind Wohlleben's book employs. The metaphors of human life that he uses helps create a sense of intimacy between humans and nature, much in the same way as stories of Women Who Marry the Bear create respect for fellow creatures. In this sense, both are promoting ecological modes of relatedness. The choice of language, in tree communication and in Bear love, so different from the anemic, academic discourse of experts, is precisely

what our robotic, daylight-saved era needs. Alas, Central Europeans value nature only as *their* "resources," in the old biblical model of "It's yours; abuse it as much as you want," so that nature's presence in its original, "wild" form is becoming scarce. As forests are cut down, it becomes increasingly hard for Europeans to enter the Wild, encouraging them to place value, or rather, calculable *worth*, on nature as a site of pleasurable, healing, and invigorating experiences, rather than as a society of its own creation.

My lengthy disquisition on maternal trees offers us a peek at how matriarchal cultures looked upon nature, beyond the commodifying logic of even non-ecological feminist modernity. It is no secret that prepatriarchal cultures were more ecologically and socially savvy than moderns, and it was this kind of an organic understanding that Bear marriage used. To think this way is neither "primitive" nor "uncivilized," unless we measure "civilization" solely on the basis of destructive technologies and unsustainable practices. Yes, modern chemistry has produced a huge number of medical and other technological inventions, but if their price is the loss of livability on this blue planet, then the price is too high. By the way, to develop their medicine, most chemists go to "primitive" cultures, look at which plants they use for which medical problems, and then simply test for the active chemical ingredient to replicate. This is not so much "invention" as it is exploitation, especially as they do not pay royalties to the Indigenous peoples who really discovered the efficacy of the plants.[120]

As Tewa and scholar Gregory Cajete puts it, telling the story is the point. Each community lives on the back of its tradition, which is the life's blood of that people. There is no such excrescence around Indigenous tradition as the Western establishment's "education, or science, or art," all primly organized in Aristotelian categories. Instead, Cajete translates the closest Tewa term for passing along tradition as "coming-to-know." It is a "coming-to-understand" that "metaphorically entails a journey, a process, a quest for knowledge and understanding." It does not occur sitting behind rows of desks, but through dance, ceremony, song, drumming, which all encapsulate reality's "cycle, balance, death, and renewal."[121] This is the knowledge of Bear. It comes to an end only when the stories themselves stop.

The problem of modernity is one of imagination, or rather the lack of it. Alternative wisdom is key to developing social imagination for sustainability. I am in alignment with Jürgen Kremer: the way to this imagination is through a revival of ancient consciousness, which, if Carl Jung was correct, is bubbling around right now in our collective unconscious as instincts, if

we will only notice them.[122] Kremer holds that the "ecological crisis can be understood as the effect of a misguided epistemology," not to be corrected "within one lifetime," for tradition takes generations to produce. Following what he calls a "prolonged history of dissociation," recovery is necessarily a "multigenerational project."[123]

Kremer may be seen to walk perilously close to suggesting an appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and lifeways, but we need not take that shortcut to ecological wisdom traditions. We need not even go back to the bear religion of the Bölling–Allerød period. We need only realize that we, northern Scandinavians and Finno-Ugric peoples, too, are indigenous (prior to becoming colonized). Simply recovering our own, various ethnocultural indigenous roots in prepatriarchal myths and oral stories may well put our own matristic, life-oriented worldview within our grasp. It is certainly the only road to ecological salvation. Our hard-core five thousand years of patriarchal conquest, rivalry, abuse, and colonialism can in no way compete with the kinds of Original Instructions that, in their broadest spectrum, governed the ancient gift imaginary.

Women have the right to know of the "animistic" animal-human herstory, about the very different valence of the maternal in the eras prior to missionary politics in science, religion, and culture. Right now, not only *Kuurikki* (the vengeful form of Mielikki) but many other spirits of nature have turned their backs on humanity for its ungrateful and shortsighted abuse of Mother Earth, the rape of the commons, and its privatization against all common sense. Hence, I hope that this book helps place the Primal Ma, the grandmother culture, and the female ancestral world back in the center, where it deserves to be. Motherhood is the key issue of this era, says Claudia von Wehrlhof.[124] Gifting is the veiled premise of the Primal Ma, without which we would not survive, but the gift has been concealed by exchange.

Love, charity, and solidarity as the basis of an ethic beyond patriarchy are insufficient, however, naive and optimistic given what we are facing today. The value matrixes are not the problem; it is the *individualism* of their definition. By their nature, Bear marriage values are collective, so that consensus is required to redeem meaning. Gifting is not sufficiently contained within individually distributed "care" or "responsibility," which again, happen one by one, as someone gets around to them. In the old gifting model, whole towns hosted and gave to whole other towns. Now, *there* is a model that holds. It is not one bear hibernating to conserve energy and environment but all the

bears hibernating at once with their human pets sleeping beside them. That is what makes the difference.

This book has noted the importance of replacing the divinity of the singular father-son pair in patriarchy with that of the plural mothers-daughters in matriarchy. As we have tried to show, maternal love is a cultural rather than reductively biological model. For anchoring us to the chain of unlimited, oceanic bonding through gifting, its equivalent exists nowhere else in human society. The manipulative politics of romanticized love, female sacrifice, and maudlin mothering has cemented women's lack of autonomy to poverty in old age due to the social costs of mothering under an exchange economy. By contrast, the Bear marriage is about male sacrifice of his very life to ensure the continuance of mother and child. His resurgence will come with the spring, as he miraculously wakes up from his winter's death. More importantly, the Bear Ma and her cubs gambol through the woods to water's edge.

Love itself needs to be rethought, since its current interpretation makes people feel a shameful discomfort in evoking it. Westerners assume that one is talking about raw, sexual intercourse. Alternatively, they assume it is mawkish sentimentality around kinship, but love is neither the selfish, momentary release of endorphins and oxytocin in the sex act nor the pretense of caring due to genetic connection at birth. Under either of these cheap definitions of love, its associations are those of dependency, manipulation, exploitation, and weakness.

No. Real love is fierce, and it is about balance. Love is Wolf keeping Elk within the limits of what Yellowstone can support; it is Bear keeping berries and salmon from overrunning their ecological niches. Love is the stars staying in outer space, leaving the one sun to rise instead of the nine false suns to fall. Love is trees communicating and cooperating through the media of fungi. The love between Woman and Bear carries such associations of an ecological eros that originally represented a cosmic type of universal love as mutual guardianship and interdependency. If we want to "save the planet"—which itself sounds like a worn-out cliché—then we need to revive imaginaries of a radically alternative worldview, something that Bear mythology in its nondogmatic form of spirituality provides.

Similarly, Western feminists' cries of "sisterhood," waved aloft as a cure-all, were originally, as Shelley Wright reminds us, raised as a banner of identification and change in the late 1960s. Like love, sisterhood has since been working hard not to become a greeting card maxim, full of "nostalgia" and "sentimentality." It was abandoned because "undutiful" daughters failed to

recognize their allegiance to Father over Mother or to jettison their privileged identity as European, heterosexual, bourgeoise Marxists. Wright believes that the path forward steps beyond the nuclear family of patriarchy, which pretends bonds of love but in fact operates through bonds of class bigotries, racism, and genderism, but here is the catch: giving up privilege is scary. There is no guarantee that one will recoup the loss. Hence, Western feminists have remained Athena, popping whole out of their father's brains, their "competitive narrowness," their "rigidity," and their "apparent dogmatism" intact. The only useful sisterhood is that which escapes Zeus, but there is a rumor that this would require the "absolute destruction" of Father, itself a problematic goal.[125] Both pitfalls ultimately derive from the lure that individualism holds for Westerners.

It is worth remembering that Indigenous women, who are purportedly the model for "going native" (you know, all that world-saving) do not hate their men but are rather fond of them. Worse, Indigenous writings still evoke a quizzical response; they are patronized more than appreciated. I think this is because, although Sister is important to Indigenous cultures, the primary bond is that of Mother-Daughter.[126] Since many feminists shy away from modern matriarchal studies, they often do not fully grasp anything beyond simplifying stereotypes of ♥Mother's Day♥ because, pretense aside, "Mother" remains a word of fear, avoided in our current climate of supposed gender neutrality, as promoted by Zeus's Athena.

All the feminist talk about diversity and queerness regularly manages to forget the nonhuman persons and the crises to which modern blindness toward nature predisposes us. For a radical shift to happen, not only women but men, too, must learn once more how to change into Bears. By that, I mean that they would do well, particularly among non-Indigenous peoples, to destroy the false Father in themselves, to replace the false hero, the "master," the monarch, the dictator, and the tyrant with a nonchauvinistic brotherhood rooted in Bear's Original Instructions. Matriarchal brothers are saved and tested, initiated, and empowered by their sisters, rather than trained in violence and toxic masculinity.

Gender studies promote a curiously insipid, neutral interpretation of a genderless gender, to prevent anyone from saying anything upsetting (apparently, the highest bourgeois value). The effect of this social cowardice is to kill Mother and put the X-chromosome to shame, making it "radical" to defend grandmother cultures, past or present. Rather than despise Elders as costly healthcare burdens, grandmother cultures treasure their experience

as worth listening to, because wisdom is valued over the quick fixes of profit-promising innovations. Spitting the word "essentialist" at Grandmother simply works in favor of the juridical, "master" imaginary. Essentialism is a misnomer, however, for within matriarchy, motherhood is not a biological essence but the cultural model with which men, too, identify.[127] Nothing much will change in the world as long as the patriarchal model continues to constitute the core of ceremonial and ritual life, while Western women cringe and run for the exit the moment their ideas are challenged.

According to Heide Goettner-Abendroth, a reluctance to accept the existence of matriarchies might be based on a specific, culturally biased notion of how to define matriarchy: because in a patriarchy men rule over women, a matriarchy has frequently been theorized as women ruling over men, although her studies reveal that matriarchies are egalitarian.[128] This is so even though women have the highest moral authority to transmit the ancient wisdom traditions. Among the Iroquois, for example, it is believed that the weakest must have the power to prevent testosterone-crazed young men from abusing their strength. The councils of elder women determine war and peace and demote male leaders and warriors who turn out to be harmful to the culture.[129] This is an interpretation of equality different from that of the rigid Western binary system, which allows hegemonic alpha males to control power and resources at the expense of the most vulnerable, typically young and elderly women.

The issue before us is not whether women should be the Angels in the Ecosystem or Indigenous peoples the Noble Savages running briskly to save "us." The issue is that the shortsighted, ego-centered exchange economy has overtaken the gift economy, to exploit the traditionally female purviews of healthcare and education. When gift-giving is represented as a merely individual, private way of living, patriarchally defined as "charity," the essence of the gift economy is lost. Among Indigenous peoples to this day, and also as part of the European past, the gift was a collective duty and a generalized practice.[130]

Bear first modeled this cosmic form of relatedness. The Original Instructions of the Woman Who Married the Bear helped safeguard balanced relations between the human and nonhuman realms. Together, Woman and Bear prevented the kind of brutal treatment originally reserved for the animals that now constitute too many humans' fast food and feast food. Under the Bear marriage, many sites were considered sacred and taboo, which prevented them from becoming objects of crude extraction, as is the case

now with holy mountains and sacred lakes, under the celebration of plunder that is capitalism. The old folks were miles ahead of us in understanding Bear's Original Instructions to husband the land instead of privatizing it, to protect the cubs—and the wife—with his life, so that community could continue for all. To privatize means to deprive as it comes from the Latin *privare*, to rob.

Bera transformed into a bear, running away with bears, as a response to the profound harm that the current cultural regimes cause women—and men and other genders. Critics of matriarchy need to know that ancient societies are about traditional ecological knowledge and sharing, not about biological "essentialism," fascism, totalitarianism miscalled "communism," or late-stage, strained capitalism, doubling down because it is failing.[131] These are simply not ancient forms. Bera does not presuppose sameness, merger, the disappearance of the individual in all her uniqueness. Her anger will not be silenced. We need to hear it and acknowledge it, not withdraw into defensiveness, denial, and blame. (See Fig. C.2.)

The Woman Who Married the Bear therefore engages ecocriticism, the relatively new academic field that is often defined as an approach that has the potential to lead to an enhanced ethical stance regarding our relations with nature.[132] Along with ecocriticism, the related field of ecomythology,[133] defined as "the study of the relationship" between mythical narratives and the "physical environment," can be a timely new theoretical approach.[134] It considers the threats posed by climate change with its consequent food crises, supply chain failures, and financial downturns—all of which derive from the neoliberal politics of "power-over" (systems, Others, and anyone or anything "in the way").

Ecocriticism expands the notion of the "world" to include the entire ecosphere and seeks, among its many goals, to expose the links between hierarchical systems of domination and the combined Othering and exploitation of Indigenous people, women, and nature. Ecomythology complements ecocriticism by negotiating among all persons, the nonhuman as well as the human, with the intention of creating conditions for natural balance. The ecocatastrophies we have witnessed so far underline the importance of ditching the metamyths that celebrate conquest, circulating instead stories from soulscapes of elsewhere.

To address healing in depth, we can gather variants of the Woman Who Married the Bear from around the world to appreciate their shared features in pursuit of the Original Instructions, for the need to bring young people

Figure C.2 Bera, the woman who married the bear and her son. Quilt work by Kaarina Kailo.
Photograph by Arja and Alpo Huhmarniemi. Used with permission.

a set of sustainable instructions has never been greater than now. It must be our gift to the future, one lifted from antiquity to address a new era of falling stars, when the too-many suns shine too brightly for life to thrive. It is time, then, to reconsider the socioeconomic contract that governs a planet seized by unelected neoliberals who are energetically deepening the gulf between the haves and the have-nots.[135] We may not think of myth in critical moments of life, but myth thinks of us. It is the eternal theme of apocalypse mythology.

The Woman Who Married the Bear listens to Bear's point of view, as the primary component of survival. Bear spirituality and its life-oriented worldview have through initiation rites and shamanism been also linked to healing, both individual and collective. As kinds of world renewal rituals, Bear ceremonial rites aimed at preventing loss of the food cycles and starvation, something the Bear spirit helped prevent. Bear-style healing was physical and real, having to do with eating regularly and staying warm, a very different meaning from the individualistic psycho-babble of modern life.

Etymologically, "to heal" connects with the German *heilen*, while the Indo-European root **kailo-* refers to the state and process of wholeness. In fact, the word "whole" also connects with this root. Moreover, "to heal" is connected to "holy" through *heilen* to *heilig*, which means "holy." We see these roots re-emerge as wholistic and transpersonal, rather than selfish and trendy. In his analysis of "healing," Bruce Lincoln puts all this into Indo-European context by noting that not only the "damaged body" is healed, but the "very universe itself" that is repaired. The "full extent of such knowledge is now revealed in all its grandeur: The healer must understand and be prepared to manipulate nothing less than the full structure of the cosmos."[136] Perhaps this is what antiquity's bear-headed figurines of women were about.

We can easily conclude that inherent in these etymologies is an epistemology, but caution is advisable here. The agency of Indigenous epistemologies lies not in any self-reflexive individual. That is the eighteenth-century, Eurocentric "Enlightenment" talking. In fact, whether it is even helpful to use the term "epistemology" in connection with cross-cultural exchanges remains to be determined. Lincoln's explanation suggests that the answer to epistemological conundrums are found via very different means, through shamanic inquiry rather than through overly intellectualized discourses.[137]

Jürgen Kremer believes that our ecological crisis can be understood as the effect of a misguided epistemology. Recovery of an ancient mindset will aid in addressing the current ecological disaster, but that first requires the reanimation of an intrinsic set point that cannot be faked. For Westerns to "presume" that in just their lifetime they can reclaim the sort of "immanent conversation still practised by contemporary native peoples (even in the face of colonization)" is an act of "hubris." Kremer insists that "recovering" Indigenous thoughtways after a "prolonged history of dissociation" will necessarily be a "multigenerational project."[138]

Final Remarks: Stepping out of "It"

Since the early nineteenth century, it has been the habit of Western scholarship to reduce all tradition to symbolic literary representations, starting with its own bible.[139] The result has been to slight women's and animals' and plants' traditions as throwaway midrash, but nineteenth-century arrogance has passed its "use by" date. It has curdled to the point of stinking, and like The Woman Who Married the Bear, we would rather not step in it. Instead, we have tried to sort out the old from the new, the propositions of ancient matriarchy from those of latter-day patriarchy, to jump-start recovery of the sacred. When the stories are about advancing pregnancy, childbirth, and group welfare, we are looking at the ancient Bear influences. When the material is about promoting death through abuse of others in hunting or revenge, we are looking at Bronze Age influences. We try to pinpoint when Bear was taken from his original context of life and renewal to be reinterpreted as meat, his teeth, fur, and claws ornamental byproducts of the hunt.

In sniffing out menarche, Bear is choosing life. In being hurt emotionally when he is cursed for his droppings, he is rejecting self-centered judgments. In kindly sharing his cave and his hibernation with his wife, he is venerating community. In dying to feed his wife's kin, he is embodying the gift; and in resurrecting again from the leaves covering his bones, he is honoring seasonal renewal. These are part of the oldest stories honoring matriarchy, and they connect with stars that stay aloft in the sky, where they belong. By contrast, in controlling the woman through fear, Bear is elevating intimate male anger. In avenging her against her brutal brothers, he has entered the realm of juridical vengeance. By being hunted and then staying dead—sufficiently gone that his skull cap may be riotously used as a drinking cup—he is supporting the conquest of nature. These are the newest stories. They dramatize conflicts and cruelties, loyalties divided between one's sexual partner and one's patriarchal family, valorizing Bronze Age violence against the weak.

Invasion by roaming raiders moving east into the Americas and west into Eurasia combined with sky-born calamity to summon the switchover in Bear messages. The false suns rose and the stars fell; nature died, as nuclear winter set in. The humans who survived the drastic thinning of their numbers between 12,900 and 11,700 BP were numb with cold and anger, at the winter that would not end, and at the old ways of matriarchy for betraying them. Patriarchal domination became the new lifeway, with killing and control the new set points.

Now the promise of that second set point has failed us all. Nature is almost dead, as are the stories extolling conquest. We have before us blessing or curse. Blessing worked for at least fifty thousand years before curse overtook thought. In just five thousand years, the curse of violence has managed to dismantle this little water planet. Therefore, let us choose life.[140]

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Chapter 1

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148. Boas, "Bella Coola Indians," 112.
149. Boas, "Bella Coola Indians," 113.
150. Boas, "Bella Coola Indians," 113. Like his squeamish cohort, Boas lapsed into Latin for the part describing Bear bride's menses: *Forte ante ignem pedibus passis sedebat cum subito menses facere coepit. Postea sorore arrepta vulvam capite eius detergebat simulque se eam ad id ipsum dicebat servasse.* (Perhaps [s]he was sitting before the fire with outstretched feet, when [s]he suddenly began to do so [menstruate] for months. Afterward, taking her sister, she wiped off her vulva with her head, and said at the same time that she had saved her for that very purpose.) Any translation errors are mine.
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Chapter 2

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Part II

1. Although we do not deal with the Korean/East Asian bear mythologies in this book, we wish to draw attention to their relevance to our theme. See Helen Hye-Sook Hwang, "Goma, the Shaman Ruler of Magoist East Asia/Korea, and Her Mythology," in *Goddesses in Myth, History and Culture*, ed. Helen Hye-Sook Hwang and Mary Ann Beavis (Lytle Creek, CA: Mago Books, 2018), 251–75. Hye-Sook Hwang engages in

transdisciplinary, comparative, and feminist approaches to elucidate the Asian Goma myth and has published a Magoist study of the Korean foundation myth, also known as the Dangun myth. It reinstates Goma, better known as "Ungnyeo (Bear/Sovereign Woman)," the shaman ruler of pre-patriarchal Korea, being the main character of the Korean foundation myth. As Hye-Sook Hwang explains, here "Mago" stands for the Creatrix and "Magoism" for pre-patriarchally originated indigenous tradition of East Asia that venerates the Creatrix. She joins other scholars in identifying Goma as the ruler Goddess of Old Korea/East Asia. Echoing what we write about in this book, Hye-Sook Hwang notes that most studies tend to be monodisciplinary or androcentric in their approaches and consequently fail to assess her full-fledged supreme identity as the ancestor ruler of East Asian nations. Bringing to mind our findings, Hye-Sook Hwang writes: "A common understanding of the Korean foundation myth goes that she was the bear who became a woman and married Hanung, the ruler of Old Korea, and gave birth to a son, Dangun, the founder of the proto-Chinese Joseon dynasty (2333 BCE–232 BCE). We learn that as elsewhere during antiquity, Goma is diminished to the role of a mother of an assumed male hero at best. Consequently, she is redacted from the mytho-historical context of Old Magoist Korea/East Asia (the pre-patriarchal gynocentric people of the Creartrix), and divested of her supreme identity as the dynastic founder of Danguk (3898 BCE–2333 BCE). The connections between the cosmic numbers seven and nine and matriarchy are found here: Chilseongsin (Seven Star Divine) or Chilseong Halmi (Seven Star Great Mother) is another epithet for Samsin Halmi (Triad Divine Great Mother) who is believed to reside in the Big Dipper asterism, part of the Great Bear Constellation. Kailo picks up the bear-woman connection in this context in a forthcoming study focused on the bear goddesses around the world." In the stories Hye-Sook Hwang analyzes, we find again a peaceful, woman-led culture and the very same symbols and mentifacts that we elaborate on in this book: the cave, the bear, initiation tests and moral tests (original instructions).

Chapter 3

1. Leslie Gray, "Where Is the Holy Land?," in *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, ed. Melissa K. Nelson (Rochester, VT: Bear & Co., 2008), "Original Instructions," 86–87.
2. Kaarina Kailo, "Sauna Exists, Therefore I Am: Gifting Rituals of the Finnish Sauna," in "Feminist Gift Economy," special issue of *Canadian Woman Studies / Les cahiers de la femmes* 34, nos. 1–2 (2020): 140–51; Kaarina Kailo, *Saunon, siis olen: Hikimajan ja saunan yhteinen henki* [I Bathe, Therefore I Am: Affinities between the Sweat Lodge and the Sauna] ed. Virpi Venell and Teemu Kassila, (Helsinki: Four Winds Press, 2006); Kaarina Kailo, "Saunan mielenmaisema—Elämänkaarirituaalit ja suomalainen luontosuhde," in *Ekopsykologia ja perinnetieto: Polkuja eheyteen* [Ecopsychology and Traditional Knowledge: Paths toward Wholeness], ed. Irma Heiskanen and Kaarina Kailo (Helsinki: Greenspot, 2006), 246–84.

3. "Matristic" is the term Marija Gimbutas used when referring to the goddess cultures of the past. Space does not allow Kailo to elaborate on the significant differences between the terms "matrilineal," "matriarchal," and "matristic" in modern matriarchal studies and archaeomythology, but I provide a short clarification here: matristic cultures worshiped the goddess or Great Mother, but Gimbutas did not dare venture into calling them matriarchies. This is no doubt because people were unaware of the theories of the modern matriarchal pioneers like Heide Goettner-Abendroth and Peggy Reeves Sanday, who have corrected the misleading definitions of matriarchy. Such are the views of matriarchy as the mirror image of gender-exclusive patriarchy. The pioneers have found much evidence of matriarchies and stress that they are societies where elderly women are in the center of ceremonial life and rituals, but do not in any way oppress other genders. I recommend the writings of Goettner-Abendroth and Sanday for anyone who assumes that matriarchy implies domination by women. Indeed, it is a much more complex concept, referring to societies that are egalitarian even when the cultural values and lifeways are "maternal" rather than patriarchal.
4. Irwin Taylor Sanders, *Societies around the World*, vol. 1 (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), 15.
5. Mary Condren, *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.), "mentifacts," xviii
6. Kaarina Kailo, "Indigenous Women, Ecopolitics and Healing: 'Women Who Marry Bears,'" in *Minorities and Women: A Report from the Åland Minority Days in October 1997*, ed. Robert Jansson (Mariehamn: Åland Fredsinstitut, 1998), 85–121; Kaarina Kailo, "Resurrecting the She-Bear: Circumpolar Mother of Spiritual Feminism," *Canadian Woman Studies* 17, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 48–53.
7. Helga Reischl, "Who Is Kallisto? Semiotic and Discursive Comparisons of Texts about Bears, Women, and Wolves," PhD diss., Humboldt University, 2004; Helga Reischl, "On Bears, Crosses, and the North: Cultural Semiotic Reflections on Texts from the Lower Palaeolithic to the Present," *Abhandlungen der Naturhistorischen Gesellschaft Nürnberg* 45 (2005): 183–90.
8. David Emil Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 52.
9. Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess: Unearthing the Hidden Symbols of Western Civilization* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), xviii.
10. Harald Haarmann and Joan Marler, *Introducing the Mythological Crescent: Ancient Beliefs and Imagery Connecting Eurasia with Anatolia* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harassowitz Verlag, 2008), 10.
11. Kaarina Kailo, ed., *Wo(men) and Bears: The Gifts of Nature, Culture and Gender Revisited* (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education, 2008); David Rockwell, *Giving Voice to Bear: North American Indian Rituals, Myths, and Images of the Bear* (Niwot, CO: Roberts Reinhart Publishers, 1991); Kaarina Kailo, *Finnish Goddess Mythology* (Jääli, Juvenes, FI: Myyttikehrä/Mythical Spinning, 2018); for male-juridical take, see Ifi Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 32, 78, and the example of the Merina, 41–49.

12. David Ferry, *Gilgamesh: A New Rendering in English Verse* (New York: Farrer, Straus, and Giroux, 1993), 4.
13. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 5.
14. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, grasses, 15; watering holes, 7.
15. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 45.
16. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 49–51.
17. The Bible, King James Version, Numbers 22:28–30.
18. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 8.
19. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 15.
20. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 30–31.
21. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, x, 29.
22. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 89.
23. Ferry, *Gilgamesh*, 65–72; Nils-Axel Mörner, "The Flooding of Ur in Mesopotamia: New Perspectives," *Archaeological Discovery* 3, no. 1 (2015): 29.
24. For dating the arrival of patriarchy in Europe, see Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991) and Claudia Von Wehrlhof, *The Failure of Modern Civilization and the Struggle for a Deep Alternative* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), for the evolution patriarchy as happening five thousand to seven thousand years ago, 140.
25. Mori Masako, "Epic of Hou Yi," *Asian Folklore Studies* 54, no. 2 (1995): 247–52.
26. Masako, "Epic of Hou Yi," famine and large animals, 250, 253; Enkidu / Feng Meng, 250; fire and water, 244, 249, 250, 253.
27. Gimbutas, *Civilization of the Goddess*, 342.
28. Melissa K. Nelson, "Introduction—Lighting the Sun of Our Future: How These Teachings Can Provide Illumination," in *Original Instructions:. Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, ed. Melissa K. Nelson (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions / Bear & Co., 2008), 10.
29. Vesa Matteo Piludu, "The Forestland's Guests: Mythical Landscapes, Personhood, and Gender in the Finno-Karelian Bear Ceremonialism," PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2019, section 5:12.
30. Uno Holmberg, *Finno-Ugric and Siberian Mythology* (New York: Cooper Square, 1964), 85.
31. Kailo, *Finnish Goddess Mythology*, 57–85.
32. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1979; New York: Vintage Books, 1999), interspecies feedback, 19. Hyde's book is a great introduction to the values of gifting.
33. Kailo, *Wo(men) and Bears*, 272–73. For descriptions of Mielikki, see *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* [Finnish Peoples' Old Poems], (I-XIV, SKVR XII.2, no. 6480 and SKVR VII.5, no. 3298): 2 (Helsinki: SKS, 1908–48), 30–36; John Abercromby, *Pre- and Proto-historic Finns, Both Eastern and Western, with the Magic Songs of the West Finns*, 2 vols. (London: David Nutt, 1898), 1:178–79, 208, 209, 235–37.
34. Abercromby, *Pre- and Proto-historic Finns*, 1:286.
35. Hyde, *The Gift*, 19.

36. Barbara Alice Mann, *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas* (New York: Lang Publishing, 2000), 202.
37. Marija Gimbutas "The Indo-Europeanization of Europe: The Intrusion of Steppe Pastoralists from South Russia and the Transformation of Old Europe," *Word* 44, no. 2 (1993): 205.
38. Mary Condren, "The Dew of Mercy or the Blood of Sacrifice: The Choice Facing Human Civilization," *Feminist Theology* 27, no. 3 (2019): 244.
39. Irving A. Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere," *American Anthropologist* 28, no. 1 (1926): 150, 161–63.
40. Hallowell, "Bear Ceremonialism," 74–76, 88–89.
41. Juha Pentikäinen, *The Golden King of the Forest*, ed. and trans. Clive Tolley (Helsinki: Etnika, 2007), 9.
42. Anonymous, "Comment une femme a eu des griffes d'ourse," *Conte lapon* [Lapland Tale], *Revue littéraire mensuelle*, June–July 1985, 34–35.
43. Matti Sarmela, "Karhu ihmisen ympäristössä [The Bear in the Finnish Environment]," *Kolme on ko-vaa Sanaa: Kalevala-seuran vuosikirja*, 71 (1991): 209–50; Vammala: Kulttuurituotannon ja maisematutkimuksen laitos, Turun yliopisto & Satakunnan museo, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2006, 56; Uno Harva (Holmberg), Lappalaisten uskonto. Suomen suvun uskonnot 2. (Lapp religions. Religions of the Finns), (WSOY, Helsinki—Porvoo: 1915), 47; Ivar Paulson, "Die Tierknochen im Jagdritual der nordeurasischen Völker," *Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie* 84, no. 2 (1959): 270–93.
44. Pentikäinen, *Golden King of the Forest,* 9.
45. Pentikäinen, *The Golden King of the Forest*, 167; Kaarle Krohn, "Bärenlieder der Finnen" [Bear Songs of the Finns], in *Festschrift d'hommage offerte au P.W. Schmidt* (Vienna: Mechitharisten-Congregations-Buchdr., 1928), 401–6.
46. Arkadiĭ Fedorovich Anisimov, "Cosmological Concepts of the Peoples of the North," in *Studies in Siberian Shamanism*, ed. Henry N. Michael (1959; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 157–229.
47. Johann Jakob Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right: Selected Writings of Johann Jakob Bachofen*, trans. Ralph Manheim (1861; reprint, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967); Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: Myths and Cult Images, 6,500–3,500 BC, Myths and Cult Images* (1982; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
48. Anisimov, "Cosmological Concepts," 164–65.
49. Kirsti Paltto, "Rasstos and Bear Woman," in Kailo, *Wo(men) and Bears*, 117–24.
50. Annine Van der Meer, *The Language of MA, the Primal Mother: The Evolution of the Female Image in 40,000 Years of Global Venus Art* (Haag: PanSophia Press, 2013).
51. Haarmann and Marler, *Introducing the Mythological Crescent*, 75–76, 100–103, 134–37; Joan Marler, ed., *The Danube Script: Neo-Eneolithic Writing in Southeastern Europe* (Sebastopol, CA: Institute of Archaeomythology, 2008).
52. Marija Gimbutas, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe, 7,000–3,500 B.C.: Myths, Legends, and Cult Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 190–95.
53. Kailo, *Finnish Goddess Mythology*, 57–85.
54. Eero Autio, *Kotkat, Hirvet, Karhut* [Eagles, Elks, Bears) (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2000), 27, 62; his book contains a wealth of images of ancient hybrids of human and animal, regarding the Golden Woman as a hybrid of woman and bear; see especially 55–65.

55. Georgina Loucks, "The Girls and the Bear Facts: A Cross Cultural Comparison," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 5, no. 2 (1985): 218–39; Kaarina Kailo, "Hemispheric Cross-Talk—Women Collaborating on Storytelling," in *Northern Parallels: 4th Circumpolar Univ. Coop, Conference Proceedings*, ed. Shauna McLarnon and Douglas Nord (Prince George: University of Northern British Columbia, 1997), 102–16; Kathleen Elaine Geminder, "Callisto: The Recurrence and Variations of Her Myth from Ovid to Atwood," PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 1984.
56. Gimbutas, *Language of the Goddess*, xix.
57. Séamas Ó Catháin, *The Festival of Brigit: Celtic Goddess and Holy Woman* (Dublin: Dundalgan Press, 1995).
58. Toby D. Griffen, "From Art to Writing: The Megalithic Impetus for Ogam Script," *LACUS Forum* 31 (2004): 227–33.
59. Joan Marler, ed., *From the Realm of the Ancestors: An Anthology in Honor of Marija Gimbutas* (Manchester, CT: Knowledge Ideas and Trends, 1997), 464.
60. Michael Roy, "The Mystery of the Ancient Bear Goddess," Minute Mythology, posted May 6, 2020, accessed April 18, 2022, https://medium.com/minute-mythology/mystery-of-the-ancient-bear-goddess-3ea75671d201.
61. See Milton G. Nunez, "Clay Figurines from the Aland Islands and Mainland Finland," *Fennoscandia archaeologica* 3 (1986): 17–34. This is one of the few articles that in any way heed the findings of Gimbutas regarding the bird-faced goddesses. I believe one should study more closely the affinities between this Stone Age shaman figure and Gimbutas's figurines, as they have much in common.
62. Francis Joy, *Sámi Shamanism, Cosmology and Art as Systems of Embedded Knowledge* (Rovaniemi, Finland: University of Lapland, 2018), 59–119.
63. Annis Pratt, *Dancing with Goddess: Archetypes, Poetry, and Empowerment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 350.
64. Pratt, *Dancing with Goddess*, 350.
65. Mary T. Condren, "Brigit: Matronness of Poetry, Healing, Smithwork and Mercy: Female Divinity in a European Wisdom Tradition," *European Journal of Women in Theological Research* 18 (2010): 27.
66. *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot*, VII.5, nos. 3234, 3233.
67. Alexei Kondratiev, *Celtic Rituals: A Guide to Ancient Celtic Spirituality* (New York: Collins Press, T.H.E., 2004), 141.
68. Ó Catháin, *The Festival of Brigit*, xi.
69. As Joan Marler and Harald Haarmann report in "The Goddess and the Bear: Hybrid Imagery and Symbolism at Çatalhöyük," *Journal of Archeomythology* 3, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 2007). "In eastern Siberia, ancestral women who established the matrilineage of the clan or tribe play a key role in people´s cultural memory. This memory finds a visual expression in female sculptures made of wood (among the Evenki) or dolls (among the Chukchee) which are kept in each family tent as ancestor guardians of the household and its members" (65).
70. Kira Van Deusen, *The Flying Tiger—Women Shamans and Storytellers of the Amur* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 52.
71. Joanna Hubbs, *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture* (1988; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 78.

72. Susan Macmillan Kains, *The Bear Awakening: Bear as Sacred Symbol of the Divine Feminine* (Jersey City, NJ: ProBook Publishing, 2020), 27.
73. Tom Fort, *Against the Flow: Wading through Europe* (London: Arrow Books, 2010), 197.
74. Reischl, "Who Is Kallisto?," dissertation research summary, 8.
75. This plot can be found among other tales from Danish, Bosnian, Irish, Khanty (western Siberian), Aino (Sakhalin), Modoc, and Haida (North American northwest coast) traditions. Helga Reischl has analyzed them in great detail in her dissertation, "Who Is Kallisto?," which I co-supervised.
76. A good number of the Swedish and other Scandinavian tales have preserved the ancient name of "Beret" for the girl. Carl-Martin Edsman, "The Story of the Bear Wife in Nordic Tradition," *Ethnos* 21 (1956): 42.
77. Carl-Martin Edsman, "Bear Rites among the Scandinavian Lapps," *Proceedings of the International Congress of the History of Religions, Tokyo and Kyoto, 1958, August 27th–September 9th* (Tokyo: Mauzen, 1960), n.p.
78. Jurgen Kremer, "Bearing Obligations," in Kailo, *Wo(men) and Bears*, 155–56.
79. Edsman, "Story of the Bear Wife," 42.
80. Edsman, "Story of the Bear Wife," 42.
81. On Skolt-Sami origin myths, see T. I. Itkonen, *Karhusta ja sen pyynnistä Suomen Lapissa* [On the Bear and Its Capture in Finnish Lapland] (Helsinki: n.p., 1937), 21; I. T. Itkonen, *Suomen lappalaiset vuoteen* 1945 [The Finnish Lapps up to 1945] (Helsinki: Söderström, 1948), 15.
82. Edsman, "Story of the Bear Wife," 48–49.
83. Harald Haarmann, *The Mystery of the Danube Civilisation: The Discovery of Europe's Oldest Civilisation* (Wiesbaden: Marix Verlag, 2019). The book provides detailed examples of matristic rituals and lifeways.
84. Kaarina Kailo, "From the Unbearable Gaze to the Gift Imaginary: *Arch*-aic Bear Ceremonials Revisited," in Kailo, *Wo(men) and Bears*, 276.
85. Matti Sarmela, "The Finnish Bear-Hunting Drama," *Suomalais-ugrilaisen seuran toimituksia* [Publications of the Finno-Ugric Society] 183 (1983): 287. Sarmela is quoting *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot*, I.4, no. 1207 (Vuonninen: A. Borenius, 1872).
86. Evelyn J. Hinz, "Hierogamy versus Wedlock: Types of Marriage Plots and Their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction," *PMLA* 91, no. 5 (October 1976): 909.
87. In similar vein, Phoenix of Elder Mountain refers to Pehtra and Divja as original givers of light around the winter solstice (Christmas / Santa Claus story), whereas her Golden bucket is a clue to her ties with Baba Yaga. We learn that Pehtra, like the winter goddess Marzanna, belongs to the Season of Fire (autumn and winter solstice until the spring equinox), accompanied by the Grandmother Divja Jaga (the wild hunt, wild chase) and Dziki Gon or Dziki Łów (Polish). See Phoenix of Elder Mountain, "Grandmothers: Golden Baba, Stone Baba, Złoty Baba, Золотая Баба, Каменные баба," accessed January 3, 2019, https://eldermountaindreaming.com/services/.
88. Edsman, "Story of the Bear Wife," 38–42.

89. Pierre Beaucage and Eckart Boege, "Le couple Nature/Culture (encore!): Les femmes, l'Ours et le Serpent chez les Nahuas et les Mazatèques," *Recherches amérindienne ay Québec* 34, no. 1 (2004): 53–68.
90. Edsman, "Story of the Bear Wife," 36.
91. Sima Aprahamian, "Running away with Bears: Armenian Women Transcending Patriarchy," in Kailo, *Wo(men) and Bears*, 129–32.
92. Aprahamian, "Running away with Bears," 137.
93. Haarman and Marler, *Introducing the Mythological Crescent*, 49–51.
94. Haarmann and Marler, *Introducing the Mythological Crescent*, 126.
95. Zohreh Behjati-Ardakani, Mohammad Mehdi Akhondi, Homa Mahmoodzadeh, and Seyed Hasan Hosseini, "An Evaluation of the Historical Importance of Fertility and Its Reflection in Ancient Mythology, *Journal of Reproduction and Infertility* 17, no. 1 (January–March 2016): 2–9.
96. Walter L. Brenneman Jr., "The Circle and the Cross: Reflections on the Holy Wells of Ireland," *Natural Resources Journal* 45 (2005): 791.
97. Condren, "Brigit," 14.
98. *Kalevala: Epic of the Finnish People*, ed. George C. Schoolfield, trans. Eino Friberg (Helsinki: Otava, 1988), rune 50, lines 151–55. Kailo has written several books on the Finnish sauna focused on women's ceremonial and healing functions and the life cycle rituals, including birth-giving, in the sauna: Kaarina Kailo, *Sauna, naiseus ja elämänkaari: Perinnekulttuurin paluu* [Sauna, Women, and the Life Cycle: The Return of Traditional Culture] (Helsinki: Basam Books, 2022); Kaarina Kailo, *Pohjolan mytologia: saunam maa-ilma, haltijat ja jumalat/taret* [Pohjola Mythology: The World of the Sauna, Guardian Spirits, and God(desses)] (Jääli: Kailo, 2021).
99. Emilie van Opstall, "Sacred Caves in Greek Epic Poetry from Homer (Eighth Century BCE) to Nonnus (Fifth Century CE)," in *The Ideologies of Lived Space in Literary Texts, Ancient and Modern*, ed. Jacqueline Klooster and Jo Heirman (Gent: Academia Press, 2013), 26.
100. Alexander Marshack, "The Taï Plaque and Calendrical Notation in the Upper Palaeolithic," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 1 (April 1991): 25–61.
101. On definitions of matriculture, see Irene Wiens Friesen Wolfstone, *ReMembering Matricultures: Historiography of Subjugated Knowledges, an Independent Study* (Alberta: Faculty of Education University of Alberta, 2018), 50.
102. Anisimov, "Cosmological Concepts," 166.
103. Anisimov, "Cosmological Concepts," 209.
104. David Rockwell, in *Giving Voice to Bear*, for example, refers to the spirits of animals typically using ownership terms and a vocabulary that echoes the master imaginary, mastery over nature. Kailo is not sure it reflects the worldview of the Indigenous peoples he refers to: "Like other northern peoples, Cree believed that an 'owner' or 'spirit boss' controlled every species of animal" (26). It is rather typical of male scholars to resort to the language of mastery, control, and ownership when discussing the shamanic-spiritual phenomena. It hardly does justice to the interspecies feedback and positive human-animal relations that characterized women's outlook, if it even describes the

ethos of any prepatriarchal peoples. A. Irving Hallowell, in "Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere," likewise uses this discourse: "The bear was believed to represent or was under the spiritual control of some supernatural being or power which governed either the potential supply of certain game animal or the bear species alone. It is the propitiation of this supernatural agent which is actually desired" (145).

105. It is so common to refer to the great mothers of Finland and of the ancient Finno-Ugric North as wives that listing the examples would take over the space here. It is high time to resurrect the independent great bear goddesses to whom some scholars as exceptions to the rule have made reference. See especially M. A. Czaplica, *Aboriginal Siberia: A Study in Social Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914) and O. Nahodil, "Mother Cult in Siberia," in *Popular Beliefs in Siberia*, ed. V. Dioszegi, trans. Stephen P. Dunn (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1968), 470.
106. Richard Bradley, *An Archaeology of Natural Places* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 11.
107. *Kalevala*, rune 39, lines 6–70.
108. *Kalevala*, rune 43, 13th stanza, line 9.
109. Gimbutas, *Language of the Goddess*, 320.
110. Timo Heikkilä also sees the milk symbolism in folktales about the Nature spirits (*Kalevala*, rune 9, lines 25–26) as a metaphor of the Milky Way, *linnunrata*, and its milk-like primal energy of creation: *Kalevalan metafysiikka ja fysiikka* (Helsinki: Like, 1999), 249.
111. Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *The Dancing Goddesses: Folklore, Archaeology and the Origins of European Dance* (London: Norton, 2013), 14–19, 24–27.
112. Kailo, *Finnish Goddess Mythology*, 75.
113. According to Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders, *The Sacred Paw: The Bear in Nature, Myth and Literature* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985): "In 1832 an ancient statute of Artio, a Celtic bear goddess, was exhumed from beneath the streets of Bern, Switzerland. The source of the Bridget is in the stem word for 'bear'; she is a Celtic fire goddess and Christian saint. Linked to the same word origins are 'bright' and 'shine, reminding us of Jung's assertion that there is a bear glowing deep in the human unconscious. Bruin means not only 'bear,' but also 'brown,' 'bright,' and 'burnish' " (xiv).
114. Pratt, *Dancing with Goddess*, 352.
115. On this topic, see Xavier Delamarre, *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise: Une approche linguistique du vieux-celtique continental*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Errance, 2003).
116. Rockwell, *Giving Voice to Bear*, 192.
117. Kaarina Kailo, "The Helka Festival—Traces of a Finno-Ugric Matriarchy and Worldview?," in *Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past, Present, Future*, ed. Heide Goettner-Abendroth (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education, 2009), 335.
118. Kailo, "The Helka Festival," 335–37.
119. Edsman, "Story of the Bear Wife," 43.
120. To quote Rockwell, *Giving Voice to Bear*: "An Ojibwa girl about to start her first menstrual period was called wemukowe, which means 'going to be a bear.' At the first sign of her blood she smeared soot around her eyes and put on her poorest clothes. Her mother or grandmother rushed her out of the village to a tiny hut hidden in the

forest. As they slipped away along a path where they were unlikely to meet anyone, the girl looked only at the ground and touched nothing. The Ojibwa believed her powers to be so great that her glance or touch could bring paralysis to another, death to a child, or the destruction of the year's crop. At the hut, the girl crawled inside. Her mother closed the entrance and returned to the family's lodge. During her seclusion, the girl's relatives called her mukowe literally 'she is a bear' " (17).

121. Edsman, "Story of the Bear Wife," 36.
122. Condren, *Serpent and the Goddess*, 58.
123. Kirstin Madden, "Menstruation Rituals," *Circle: Network News, Nature Spirituality Quarterly* 67 (Spring 1998): 31.
124. Lara Owen, *Honoring Menstruation: A Time of Self-Renewal* (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1998), 17.
125. Duane Voskuil, "From Genetic Cosmology to Genital Cosmetics: Origin Theories of the Righting Rites of Male Circumcision," paper presented at the Third International Symposium on Circumcision, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, May 24, 1994, last updated August 1, 2016, accessed April 19, 2022, https://www.nocirc.org/symposia/third/voskuil.html#n20.
126. Heide Göttner-Abendroth, *The Goddess and Her Hero[e]s*, trans. Lilian Friedberb (1980; Stow, MA: Anthony, 1995), xvi.
127. Gimbutas, *Goddesses and Gods*, 2.
128. Gimbutas, *Goddesses and Gods*, 176.
129. James Mellaart, "Excavations at Çatal Hüyük: First Preliminary Report, 1961," *Anatolian Studies* 12 (1962): 41–65.
130. Starr Goode, *Sheela na gig: The Dark Goddess of Sacred Powe*r (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2016), 146–210.
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133. "Ecomythology" is a term used by Kaarina Kailo in her many ecofeminist articles and anthologies, e.g., *Wo(men) and Bears: The Gifts of Nature, Culture and Gender Revisited*, ed. Kaarina Kailo (Toronto: Inanna Press, 2008).
134. Cheryll Glotfelty, "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Era of Environmental Crisis," in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xiii.
135. Anand Giridharadas, *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019), especially 39–51.
136. Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 118.

137. Kremer, *Are There Indigenous Epistemologies*, 8; see also Jürgen W. Kremer, "Bearing Obligations," in Kailo, *Wo(men) and Bears*, 148–50.
138. Jürgen W. Kremer, "Shamanic Inquiry as Recovery of Indigenous Mind," in "What Is a Shaman?," ed. A. Schenk and Ch. Rätsch, special issue, *Journal for Ethnomedicine* 13 (1999): 131.
139. Jeanie C. Crain, *Reading the Bible as Literature: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 180 n. 95.
140. Obviously, we are paraphrasing דְּבָרִים (Deuteronomy) 30:19.

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